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University of Oklahoma Collection Development Conference 2001

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The University of Oklahoma Libraries has sponsored for over a decade an annual winter conference on themes related to Collection Development. The theme for this year's conference, March 1-2, 2001 was "Digital Age: Impact on Library Collections and Cooperation." Held adjacent to the Oklahoma City airport, and about 45 minutes from the Norman campus, about 100 delegates came to hear from a list of very well respected speakers. Each addressed a series of themes that impact on the current digital age we are in and challenged the attendees to think outside and beyond the box defined by current organizational structures, technologies and practices.

The first speaker, Paula Kaufman, University Librarian at the University of Illinois at Urbana/Champaign took a departure from Brian Hawkins' well- known ten predictions about changes in academic libraries regarding technology and offered instead 12 predictions that she thinks are in the near future for academic research libraries. Perhaps uneven enthusiasm for all of them is due to the fact that it is hard to scale some of them to the most critical focus of all academic libraries.

They include:

1. Access to tangible (printed) information sources will continue to be important.

2. Scholarly communication will continue to reflect the changes of info-technology, but is not always substantially equal in all of its parts.

3. Dependence on the MARC format for providing intellectual access to library holdings will diminish.

4. Technical Services as we know it will change and all librarians might not recognize it or be comfortable with what it is or where it resides within the library.

5. Technologies and standards for preserving digital information and assuring perpetual access will emerge, but resolution of selection principles and inter-institutional organizational structures will develop much more slowly.

6. Library buildings will become more important in the future.

7. There will be fewer library consortia. They will be larger in size and scope and more powerful. There will be many new types of partnerships with collaborative activities.

8. Services in the age of the never satisfied library user will be influenced by the continuing commercialisation and development of the Internet. According to Tim Berners Lee, the Internet is only half finished.

9. Libraries will remain stable, even with increasing competition from the growing commercial sector.

10. Public policy issues will have more impact on libraries' success than technology issues.

11. Supply of librarians to work in academic libraries will continue to dwindle and will create a serious barrier to future success.

12. Necessary critical University infrastructure will be missing, making it difficult to achieve goals.

Kaufman offered many examples of how challenging life will be for library leaders, administrators and librarians. There are many exciting things that are happening and, if sufficient funding is available, new partnerships with evolve to achieve goals and these predictions will become reality.

Clifford Lynch, Executive Director of the Coalition of Networked Information (CNI), introduced his topic, "What Do Digital Books Mean for Libraries?" as "not a tidy subject, it contains lots of confusion with issues related to libraries, about communications between authors and readers." He sees a dichotomy between what is produced for the scholarly market and what is produced for the consumer market - the reason for the dichotomy is that what is today's popular culture is tomorrow's scholarship. He sees an emergence of encyclopedia building in the digital arena with Web sites becoming the new encyclopedic genre, incrementally updated, searched and read selectively as a specific source on a topic.

Lynch explained the difference between books stored digitally and digitized print books, where the mentality is basically a print on demand factor. He developed his thesis about "print between two covers":

the need to rethink the scholarly monograph;

the textbook - will require and create new connections with classroom instruction technology;

the novel - not yet persuasive as a digital form.

The e-book is a "weird thing" and there are currently three players in masterminding its production: Adobe, Microsoft, and Gemstar. Attributes of books suggest the concept of being lent and the notion of substitution. With an e-book, a literal translation of turning pages is misleading because an e-book is very different than an element in a digital library, where a different culture emerges. Individual books suggest individual choices that parallel those uses; however, with digital content, there is an entirely different set of ramifications

for readers, libraries and the information market chain. The notion of obsolescence describes e-books, which does not necessarily characterize print.

Lynch concluded his presentation by suggesting that currently e-books offer different challenges for libraries - e-books mimic print and offer a dual publication option and are not meant to be lent; there is a non-issue for scholarly material because research material has its own marketplace in academic research libraries; and consumer e-books are over-hyped at present. It will be interesting to see how fast and how far things change in the coming few years.

Philip Blackwell, Group Chief Executive of Blackwell Ltd, delivered a talk on "Remaining Relevant in the Digital Age." He prefaced his remarks that he has entered the publishing industry only 15 months ago and is very influenced by market surveys and consumer demands.

He poses the question, "What does the user want?" and replies with:

Aggregation - over many products and across the content of the whole book.

Powerful searching options with subject access.

Portability and the ability to exploit the Web.

Disaggregation.

Now, what does the librarian want from e-books?:

Collection development practiced consistently and evenly.

Multiple user access.

Flexible validation and authentication practices.

Integration with other information products.

Predictable copyright clearance.

Easy, flexible pricing models.

What does the publisher want from e-books?:

Advance and alerting services.

Availability in approval plans.

Additional rights management support.

File hosting.

Blackwell sees the future role of a vendor as providing distribution of e-books for publishers, access to librarians and service for users. He concludes by saying that "print is still a viable commodity," and is not dead - instead customer needs are evolving; there are huge gaps which need to be closed between customers or readers and delivery schemes; many new partnerships will emerge and defining a new reading culture will reduce current barriers in e-book usage.

Dennis Dillon, Assistant Director for Collections and Information Resources at the University of Texas at Austin, gave a very interesting paper, "Songs of the Dodo: Information Extinctions, Innovation and Ecosystem Change," drawing parallels between the developments of the ecosystem and how information output experiences new formats, environmental changes that affect libraries in offering new programs, services and collections. There are many new tools to understand the new complex and unpredictable environment that describes academic libraries. The big question is, will libraries continue to evolve or go the way of the dodo?

Prudence Adler, Associate Executive Director for Federal Relations and Information Policy at the Association of Research Libraries, gave a very clear talk about the challenges for libraries regarding copyright and intellectual property legislation. She offered an update of the 1998 Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) and addressed issues of fair use, concerns for online service providers, distance education applications, terms of protection and as digital technology for preservation. This update gave relevant summaries of status of UCITA, current court cases and what preservation and access issues are of most concern to ALA and ARL. The implications for library services and collections are many, with perpetual access or extension being a critical issue. It suggests potential additional costs to libraries and determines that fewer works enter the public domain. Adler called for harmonization between US and European copyright legislation, across states with UCITA having been now passed in two states.

The second day of the conference opened with Karin Trainer, University Librarian at Princeton, introducing the history of "Research Library Cooperation in the Digital Age." The legacy of cooperation is long and spans interlibrary loan and shared cataloging, shared resource and acquisitions programs, bibliographic utilities that allowed for searching worldwide and working more locally. Technological developments offered links to full-text and shared storage facilities. There are numerous examples of these cooperative ventures, all of which remain in more sophisticated models today, but the commitment to share wisely is seen with one of the newest efforts, ARL's New Measures Project, which will define new bibliometric schemes to describe library resources.

Charles Cullen, President and Librarian of the Newberry Library, followed Trainer's points, picking up on how Julian Boy, as Archivist and Curator of the Jefferson Papers at Princeton, set a tone for how new technologies now support the documenting and editing of special collections. How librarians choose what to digitize should depend on the specialized users

of the collections and reflect priorities that include conservation measures and a worldwide view. Increased access to the collection is noted by offering searchability of images and text. Priorities of these considerations may include:

design of projects - the complexity of various editions;

format of original documents;

purpose to potential readership and use of collection;

funding available for the project;

audiences for the project.

Cullen reminded his audience of the role of new metadata to incorporate in these new tools and how improved and more complete cataloging becomes, that promotion of use is easier, and Internet and digital formats erase some serious boundaries.

One of the last papers was a description of the Texas A&M University Digital Library (TAMUDL), explained by Fred Heath, University Librarian, and Dilawar Grewal, Director of the Digital Library. TAMUDL has a sophisticated architecture made possible by extensive partnerships with the A&M academic community. The focus of this presentation was how to create a place for new forms of data that correspond to local academic research interests in genomics, ocean drilling, meteorology, seismic data, etc. The goal of TAMUDL is to expand the concept of a repository of information into a series of methods of delivering information and translating it into knowledge.

It lies parallel to the traditional library community but with a greater emphasis on information technology and greater collaboration between consortia, academic ventures, and practicing brute force versus finesse in seeing the means of delivery reach different communities with needs for new standards of relevance. Heath summarized this enterprise as one that expands the ecological niche of information by becoming a campus resource instead of only a library utility, it addresses issues of acquisition, archiving and preservation of information elements, and as a digital library advances the inquiry from traditional content to a merging of enhanced access.

Karen Hunter, Senior Vice-President of Elsevier Science Publishers, wrapped up the conference by exploring what impacts there would be if a publisher such as Elsevier would "Go Electronic Only." She shared the decision making a major player like Elsevier has made, as it undergoes transition to a more electronic model, by recapping the outcome of an international survey she conducted of its customers to determine at what stages libraries were in accepting only electronic releases. That still seems to be a way off, but different parts of the world are increasingly more receptive (for example, Australia and Sweden) and she predicts that, with more success in e-archiving occurring, reducing the problems of taxation and government funding, we will see wider acceptance of e-only. However,

Elsevier will continue to develop the editorial, production, marketing and administrative structures required in publishing to make the transition easier.

All nine presentations were thoughtful and exciting and offered lots to ponder. Few, if any answers or solutions were offered but the direction we will continue to see is that the digital age will continue to challenge library collections and encourage new methods of cooperation and collaboration in the academic library environment to achieve these goals.

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