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Editorial

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This issue was prepared soon after the American Library Association Midwinter Conference took place in New Orleans in mid-January. Even though attendance at the conference was lower than usual, there were many new product announcements and transitions in the information industry, and new releases of library and information technology to note. Several months later, you have the chance to capture the essence of that conference as we try and bring you selected highlights. The midwinter conference is shorter and defined as a working meeting, usually to finalize the program for the annual conference that will take place this year from June 13-18, 2002 in Atlanta.

Obviously there are several conference reports included in this issue. Hannelore Rader goes a different direction in her travels, bringing a very interesting conference report from her winter visit to China. Several pre-conferences, meetings, and discussion groups from ALA are featured. Digital reference services and technology is still in the mainstream of readers' services and Heather Tunender shares the latest from the ALA pre-conference. Building on this common interest, several teleconferences have been held in recent months offering librarians around the world access to leaders in the virtual reference movement to dissect future directions, and Colby Riggs has covered one such satellite teleconference. Also, the increasingly common launch of SFX applications is amid much buzz as more libraries of the world adopt ExLibris as their online catalog system and the Open URL project spreads. Jenny Walker, from the US office of ExLibris, updates her earlier article on SFX for us as she led several fully packed discussions on this at ALA. A few feature articles should spark your interest. Alfred Bork, a pioneer in the study of learning and technology, explores "Agile learning" and Ruth Wilson shares the EBONI experience with electronic textbooks at the University of Strathclyde. A new range of "super products" from the Oxford University Press are described by David Swarbrick as he shares how such products "go to market."

The usual columns found in most LHTN issues are all here: Howard Falk continues his smorgasbord of updates in the e-book industry and its partners. "Around the World" takes us to Hong Kong, where we are introduced to an aggressive technology infrastructure established by University Librarian Shirley Leung; the "Legal and Ethical Comment" by Stuart Hannabuss reminds us what going to law school would be like as he gives a short course on legal recourse and discourse. Gerry McKiernan is back to describe in detail the advantages and challenges of "Library Database Advisors," and details many examples. The "New Publications" column is lengthy due to publishing cycles in the new year and it is intended to meet the needs of our readers, so if you want certain emphases, please share your suggestions and directions for future coverage.

The co-editors continue to seek contributors to write up conference reports that will be of interest to the readership. Please do not hesitate to let us know what you will be attending and willing to report on in future issues.

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