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And They Were There: Reports of Meetings

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Online/CD-ROM Conference & Exposition '94
Sponsored by Online Database and CD-ROM Professional
Hyatt Regency, San Francisco, October 24-26, 1994
Report by Kate Luger and Barbara Rosen
(University of New Mexico)

How can a Conference miss when it is held in San Francisco in late October during a warm and sunny week? Attendance hit a record 2,612 people.

The mix of information industry professionals, academic librarians and vendors brings a special flavor to the Online Conferences. One panel member noted that it was hard to sum up the week as we all attended different conferences. She was right but some basic themes did run throughout the sessions. Is there still a future for both online databases and CD-ROMs? Will print information survive? What new technological developments will again change all that we now know? Will "information professionals" become obsolete? And of course, has the Internet changed everything?

The Conference was organized to have morning general sessions on Monday and Tuesday with multiple breakout meetings in the afternoons. The final day, Wednesday featured morning Listserv Roundtable discussion groups followed by two general sessions in the early afternoon. The Exhibit Hall was crowded at all times and the Internet Demo Room was always busy with live demos of new tools and sites.

William Marovitz, president of Churchill Livingstone and former CEO of BRS, Inc., gave the keynote address aptly entitled, "Looking into the Future: The New Information Equation." Marovitz's information equation dwelt with how all of the above mentioned themes can come together. He predicted that the developments in new multimedia technology will have a vast impact on the information business. He stated that CD-ROMs will reemerge as new developments will enhance this medium's usefulness for storage. Marovitz also stressed that the future would see a convergence of telecommunications, cellular, satellite and cable in relaying information through PCs. Greatly improved computer technology is still needed to really achieve many of the possibilities of the Information Highway.

Following the keynote speech was the eagerly awaited session, Major Industry Announcements. Demos of new products and new technical features were enthusiastically received and the new information served as discussion points during many of the subsequent conference sessions.

The Breakout Sessions focused on Multimedia, Online searching, Networking, CD-Recordable and above all, the Internet. Natural language searching, using the Internet in Libraries, whether the Internet needs to be taught, how should it be taught? and how you find what you need on the Internet, were all topics that drew large numbers of participants. It was apparent that most attendants were eager to learn about new technology and new techniques. Good information was exchanged on what works and doesn't at the smaller sessions. Peter Jasco's always informative session on CD-ROMs again reminded people that products do not always perform as advertised. A great advantage to the Online Conference is the easy accessibility of the vendors. Librarians and other Information professionals were repeatedly reminded that this was the perfect opportunity for them to tell vendors what products were needed and what changes would be advantageous.

The Hot Topics general session on Tuesday continued the theme of new technology and change. Howard McQueen's talk, Networking: From LANS To the Internet, dealt with the complex and exciting choices that businesses and libraries have in connecting their information systems. Networks, LANS and WANS were frequently heard words all during the Conference. People wanted to know what others were doing with Networks and how to learn more about LANS. Carol Tenopir's, Online in 1994: Tradition, Developments, and New Choices, was an excellent discussion of the large number of possibilities that face online searchers today. She outlined the complexity of systems, and client or patron requirements in the Online world and suggested approaches to dealing in an undefined environment.

Online/CD-ROM is not a Conference to leave early. The last two general sessions drew large crowds and were worth staying for. Robert C. Berring, Professor and Law Librarian, UC Berkeley, discussed The Library's Role in the Information Infrastructure. Berring outlined the traditional roles librarians have played in the information world and showed how that world has radically changed. Librarians must move from gatekeepers who "control and protect" information to creative "agents who educate and distribute" all the new forms of information technology. If librarians cannot make the shift to be flexible, noncontrolling "agents" in the new information world then they will be left to the side. Following this excellent talk, Barbara Quint's Wrap Session, continued to hit at the theme of change or move over. Barbara's sessions are always awaited with enthusiasm as she cajoles and encourages Conference attendees to demand good service, good quality products and to understand when the ground rules have changed. Quint then announced her "scoop." DataTimes will introduce a dramatic change in pricing, very low monthly flat fees for searching in early 1995. Online/CD-ROM '94 ended on an exciting note as everyone wondered if the entire pricing structure of all the vendors would have to change and how all of this would affect the future of the online and CD-ROM information world.

More detailed information is available from any of the people at the Con-
The Upside of Downsizing:
Using BI to Cope
Santa Barbara, California,
March 24-25, 1994
Report by Christina E. Carter
(Zimmerman Library,
U. of New Mexico)

Nearly 150 academic librarians and
other information professionals from
throughout the United States gathered in
this beautiful coastal city to hear about
the state of library instruction in the midst
of decreased funds and increased patron
demand on library resources and ser-
tices. The one-and-a-half day confer-
ence was sponsored by the University of
California, Santa Barbara and co-chaired
by Cheryl LaGuardia and Janet
Martorana of UCSB.

The current state of academic library
funding was outlined by keynote speaker,
Carla Stoffle, Dean of the University of
Arizona Libraries. Dean Stoffle is the
1992 ACRL Academic/Research Librar-
ian of the Year, recipient of the 1991
Miriam Dudley Bibliographic Instruc-
tion Librarian of the Year Award, and
past-President of ACRL. Stoffle opened
by stating that changes often translate
into less staff to carry on the mission of
the academic library — especially its
instructional mission. With increasing
technology, Stoffle stated, there will be
even more of an emphasis on instruc-
tion. Yet libraries, Stoffle emphasized,
are not always equipped to deal with
such demands and are often in fact "dis-
fuctional": organized for the conve-
nience of library personnel, not patrons.
The lean times in which we find our-
selves immersed can be viewed as an
opportunity for a "radical restructuring"
of library services and day-to-day con-
tact with patrons. Stoffle offered these
suggestions for improvement: (1) reduce
hierarchy in libraries by creating teams
to empower the front line to meet the
ever-changing information demands of
our clientele; (2) move from a collec-
tion-centered approach to a customer-
centered one; (3) and move more library
staff from "behind" the front lines into
public contact positions. Stoffle said that
it has often been instruction librarians
who have led the way in pointing out
shortcomings in the ways in which li-
braries and information are organized; it
was instruction librarians, for example,
who first pointed out the inadequacy of
subject headings concerning diverse
collections. Stoffle urged attendees to
think in terms of "connection develop-
ment" — focusing on reaching out to,
working with, and understanding our pa-
trons — rather than collection develop-
ment. She ended her address by remind-
ing the audience that economic adver-
sity can be viewed as advantageous in
terms of implementing difficult change;
difficult choices are often supported by
library administrations in lean times. This
is one "upside of downsizing."

The University Librarian at UCSB
(sitting in for Gerald Lowell, Univer-
sity Librarian at UC San Diego, who
could not attend), Joanne Euster (Uni-
versity Librarian at UC Irvine), and
Gloria Werner (University Librarian at
UCLA) — all three in turn picked up on
Stoffle's theme of "connection develop-
ment" by emphasizing different partners-
ships in the philosophy of library in-
struction — a more self-sufficient user:
partnerships between librarians and
teaching faculty, librarians and teaching
assistants, libraries and computer cen-
ters, and among all library staff.

Next, Janice Simmons-Welburn
(University of Iowa) presented a paper
on library instruction in the "post-biblio-
graphic instruction" era, where the em-
phasis is on the pragmatic concerns of
users and where there are simultaneously
and increasingly diverse styles of learn-
ing to deal with. At the University of
Iowa, "Library Navigator," a hypercard
program that provides basic information
about the library, and "Library Explorer,"
another hypercard tool designed as a book
with chapters on library research are two
CAI tools that enhance reference and
instructional services. Simmons-Welburn
stated that the populations of remote
users in our libraries will become larger
and will increasingly demand remote
instruction. Following Simmons-Welburn,
information broker Barbara Quint, who
is a columnist for the Wilson Library
Bulletin, did a BI "reality check." Take-
ing the side of the user, she said that
patrons have "more task than time and
more task than talent" to worry over-
much about how they get their informa-
tion. We shouldn't waste the patrons' time
with needless instruction. BI, she said,
should really develop into "information
instruction" or "II." where the
emphasis is on the teaching of retriev-
ing, transferring, and manipulating in-
formation in electronic formats. Instruc-
tion librarians should teach automation
in the library as a prime example of our
increasingly automated environment.

The first day's breakout sessions in-
cluded presentations and discussions on
improving signage, the Ohio Gateway,
teaching instructors how to teach library
skills, and helping diverse users become
information literate. This conference goer
attended the session on the Ohio Gate-
way. Fred Roecker, User Education Li-
brarian at Ohio State University, dis-
cussed this Macintosh-based system
which helps the user identify, locate, and
critically evaluate library resources and is
available from 79 PC's at Ohio State.
Remote access to the Gateway will be-
come available sometime this year and a
version is being developed which can be
easily customized to any library collect-
ion.

In the evening, poster sessions were
presented on the topics of learning to
teach library skills, multicultural users
and BI, teaching chemistry information
to non-science majors, conducting BI for
faculty, and orienting library guides to
specific course assignments.

The following morning's breakout
sessions covered teaching future librar-
ians to teach, BI and collaborative learn-
ing, teaching the Internet within tradi-
tional library orientation programs, the
Peer Information Counseling program at
the University of Michigan, and the im-
 pact of CD-ROMs on BI. Speakers in
these sessions again emphasized "con-
nection development" by stressing the
importance of partnerships between li-
brarians and students and among stu-
dents themselves in learning about li-
brary resources.

The important themes of the confer-
ence were: (1) BI is really now II or
information instruction; (2) more tech-
nical services staff should be brought
into public services; (3) there should be
much more collaboration with other units
on campus in doing library instruction;
(4) we should take the time to measure
outcomes of our instructional efforts; and
(5) we should view the academic library
as a "learning organization" — one that
adapts and changes continually, to ac-
tively teach and to meet the information
needs of its users.

Among the conference attendees,
there was unanimous agreement that
there should be regular "BI summits"
such as this gathering provided. Conference organizers are assessing when and where the next such event would occur. In the meantime, they are busily compiling the proceedings of the 1994 "Upside of Downsizing" conference, which will be published by Neal-Schuman Publishers this year.

Double Your Pleasure — LOEX East and West

Report by Linda St. Clair
(U. of New Mexico, Zimmerman Library, Instruction Coordinator)

Two conferences on library instruction were offered in 1994: LOEX in Ypsilanti, Michigan and LOEX of the West in Salem, Oregon. The two LOEX conferences were more similar than different. In fact to use the name LOEX of the West, organizers of the Northwest conference contacted Linda Shirato at the LOEX Clearinghouse in Ypsilanti and requested permission to name this conference LOEX of the West. Both of the LOEX conferences were filled to capacity. Both focused on teaching the Internet and improving instructional strategies. The trends of change in libraries and the availability of opportunities were addressed in both keynote addresses and by individual presenters. LOEX, as usual, plans to publish its proceedings. Organizers of LOEX of the West were discussing publishing the proceedings. Only the locale and the players were different.

Speakers were playing to a “packed house” again at the 1994 LOEX conference held in Ypsilanti, Michigan, May 12th and 13th! Over 180 enthusiastic participants met to listen and discuss current challenges, issues, and trends in library instruction on the theme of “Reference and BL: How Much Help and How?”

James Rettig, Associate Dean of University Libraries for Reference and Information Services, College of William and Mary, delivered the keynote address entitled “The Convergence of the Twain, or Titanic Collision?” Rettig, on reference and bibliographic instruction, stated that the split between the two is exacerbated by vague and imprecise definitions that promote misinterpretation of each function. Rettig posed that service, not bibliographic instruction, should be the hallmark of libraries. However at this time, bibliographic instruction is necessary as a remediation measure because library systems are not easy to use.

The dinner speaker was Dan Ream, Head of Instruction and Outreach Services, Virginia Commonwealth University Library. His talk entitled, “Scratch That Glitch; Or, the Fine Art of Glitch Management,” was a humorous look at “what to do when the computer fails.” Ream’s four commandments are: (1) always have a “Plan B”; (2) know equipment before it’s too late; (3) know technicians on a first-name basis; and (4) prepare your mind.

Cheryl LaGuardia, Assistant Head of Reference for Library Instruction/Computerized Information Services Coordinator from the University of California at Santa Barbara, described her experience re-designing credit courses in “Regenerating a Library Instruction Program: One Survivor’s Experience (Or, Broken Field Running at Twilight)”.

LOEX of the West was as informative and exciting! Held in Salem, Oregon, at Willamette University, June 9th through 11th, the conference was entitled “Cultivating the Electronic Landscape: Teaching & Learning in a Climate of Constant Change”. One hundred thirty nine dedicated and friendly instruction librarians from 20 different states and Canada attended. Addressing a “full house,” Betsy Wilson, Associate Director of Libraries, University of Washington, opened the conference with a keynote entitled “Glacier or Avalanche: Shifts in the Electronic, Educational, and Library Landscape”. Because of the shifting landscape of librarianship, Wilson encourages librarians to look at the present landscape differently.

Amid the changes in library clientele, technology, social framework, educational forces, economic realities, Wilson sees that opportunities abound. Basic to the new landscape, librarians need to understand the changing clientele with which we work; develop methods for on-going assessment and feedback; encourage and participate in experimentation to transform access, ways of learning, and resources; use technology to foster the transformation; and form alliances between computing centers, academic departments, student services, development officers, university administrators, and librarians. By changing attitudes, people may learn “to fall in love with change.”

A new vision of the library, the collaborative, is on the horizon. The collaboratory will support an educational agenda of critical thinking, improved teaching methods, collaborative learning, and new learning communities. Librarians can design libraries to promote self-sufficiency in clientele by improving signage and use of space, promoting methods for self-orientation, and developing systems that break down barriers instead of creating them. In closing Wilson emphasizes the importance of keeping in touch with our landscape.

Saturday morning was devoted to a workshop conducted by Mary Ellen Litzinger of Penn State University Libraries, and Randall Hensley of University of Hawaii at Manoa, on “Designing Instruction on the Electronic Frontier: Learning Styles, Instructional Design, and Electronic Information Access Systems.” Automation has changed how people think about information as well as fostered changes in instructional strategies. Because of these changes and the need to reach a diverse clientele, an understanding of learning styles is important.

Two general areas dominated the presentations at LOEX of the West: teaching electronic resources and improving methods of instruction using technology. The first on teaching the Internet included sessions on teaching faculty, forming peer support groups, promoting critical thinking in using and teaching the Net, and a session on the Net as being promoted as something it isn’t. The other area focused on the impact of the new technological environment on training and teaching. Sessions focused on working with reluctant users, influence of electronic instruction locations on teaching, using television as a means of instruction, demonstrations of multimedia teaching resources, coping with multiple electronic software packages, teaching information technologies to working adults, and a demonstration of the Ohio Gateway project. All in all, there were 12 breakout sessions available at LOEX of the West.

These were two well-organized conferences with exciting and practical strategies for instruction librarians. Opportunities were plentiful to talk over issues and ideas with new acquaintances and old friends. We, instruction librarians are looking forward to LOEX 1995 focusing on methods of teaching and learning. LOEX 1994 will be held in Denton, Texas. The next LOEX of the West is scheduled in two years. We will be there.

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