2008

If Rumors Were Horses

Katina Strauch

Against the Grain, kstrauch@comcast.net

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Google’s mission is to organize the world’s information and make it universally accessible and useful. Although it was founded in 1998, and has been a public company for less than four years, Google is now the world’s largest search engine.1

Today, Google’s influence in the information and media market spaces continues to grow through acquisition, software creation, and growing advertising revenues. At this point, we thought it would be interesting to hear what you think about Google, and your response has been overwhelming! It seems that there are many “Google Effects,” so we decided to devote both the April and June 2008 issues to this topic. In this issue, we hear from librarians that use Google products to teach students about information literacy, aid in technical services, evaluate traditional indexing and abstracting services, explore the accessibility of government information and professional collaboration.

Aline Soules (“I Google, You Google, We Google...”) discusses how she uses Google in her information literacy classes to introduce topics such as copyright, privacy, the mechanics of the Internet, etc. Aline also addresses collection development issues such as maintaining print, why buy whole books when students only read sections, and do we need perpetual access.

Carol H. Jewell (“Using Google in Technical Services: An Unscientific Survey”) conducted an informal survey of technical services librarians to see how they used Google. She shares responses from a large variety of librarians mostly in North America. She found that technical services librarians were using both Google tools as well as the search interface.

The Google Effect – Part 1

by Beth R. Bernhardt (Electronic Journals / Document Delivery Librarian, Jackson Library, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, P.O. Box 26170, Greensboro, NC 27402; Phone: 336-256-1210) <bethBernhardt@uncg.edu>

and Nathan Norris (Information Specialist, Agoos Medical Library & Information Commons, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, One Deaconess Road, Boston, MA 02215; Phone: 617-632-8311) <nnorris@bidmc.harvard.edu>

If Rumors Were Horses

And surprising news! After 30 years at Elsevier, the most fabulous John Tagler has decided to make a career change. He has accepted the position as Vice President & Executive Director of the AAP/Professional and Scholarly Publishing Division. John will be working out of AAP’s New York Office. John’s last day at Elsevier was April 15th and he began work at AAP/PSP on April 21st. Thank heavens John will continue to be in touch with most of us as he uses his experience and knowledge of STM publishing in an industry-wide setting. His personal email address is <jtagler@aol.com>. A huge congratulations, John!

And, speaking of people leaving long-time jobs, effective June 16, the incredible Mary Page will be the AUL for Technical Services at the University of California at Davis. Mary says that this is an amazing opportunity for her and she is looking forward to being part of one of the finest public universities in the States. Not to mention how excited she is to be moving to California. Did you realize that Mary has been at Rutgers for 18 years (it hardly seems possible). Says Mary: “I’ve worked with wonderful people who have challenged me to do things I never thought I was capable of, with every support and encouragement. Rutgers will always be with me, and I hold good memories of the university that educated me and employed me for a good part of my working life. No disrespect to the Davis Aggies, but I will always be a Scarlet... continued on page 6

What To Look For In This Issue:
What is a Book? ......................... 46
The Informed Librarian Online ...... 54
Emerging Trends in Textbooks — Libraries Will Feel the Effect .......... 74
Throwing Kindling on the eBook Fire ........................................... 84

Interviews
Skip Prichard........................................ 44

Profiles Encouraged
Carol Jewell............................... 26
Julie Arendt................................. 28
Bonnie Klein................................. 32
Ramirose Ilene Attebury.............. 34
Julie George................................ 38
Cindy Judd.................................. 40
Brad Marcum.............................. 40
Nicole Montgomery.................... 42
Nedelina Tchangalova............... 53

continued on page 16
From Your (juggling) Editor:

We all have to keep a lot of balls in the air, don’t we? I just got back from a quick trip to Wilmington, NC where my 93-year-old father-in-law is in a rehabilitation facility. He fell and broke his right hip about two weeks ago setting up bingo tables! This amazing man was in great shape, never using a walker or a cane, but now he is trying to adapt to being in bed all the time and having a lot of pain.

Meanwhile back at ATG world headquarters here in Charleston, our crack team of editors — the amazing Beth Bernhardt and Nathan Norris — have put together a great issue with the theme of The Google Effect. You will note that this is the first part of a two-part series! We have articles (and in most cases profiles) in this issue from Aline Soules, Carol H. Jewell, Julie Arendt, Bonnifie Klein, and Ramirose Attebury, Julie George, Cindy Judd, Brad Marcum and Nicole Montgomery. Our Op Ed is from David Lindley and asks “What is a book?” Our Back Talk pages in this issue are filled with Greg Tanaanbaum’s I Hear the Train A’Comin’ where Greg talks about the Rise of China and scholarly communication. (Tony decided he needed a day off!)

There is lots more in this issue — Todd Carpenter talks about NISO’s Thought Leaders, Mary Massey talks about the little things we try to collect, Mark Herring talks about IRs, Christine Fischer talks about moving fully to electronic journals, John Cox talks about emerging trends in textbooks, Anne Langley talks about the search committee, and I could go on and on but I will let you see for yourself!

Just heard from my sis-in-law and she says that granddad is doing much better! Whew! Sometimes we just have to put up with the extra ball from the sky!

Happy Spring!

Yr. Ed.

Letters to the Editor

Send letters to <kstrauch@comcast.net>, phone or fax 843-723-3536, or snail mail: Against the Grain, MSC 98, The Citadel, Charleston, SC 29409. You can also send a letter to the editor from the ATG Homepage at http://www.against-the-grain.com.

Dear Editor:

This is just a brief note to let you know how much I appreciate, as a student of Library and Information Science, my attendance at the 27th Annual Charleston Conference. The conference was most valuable to me in my professional growth and development. I enjoyed the “skit” and the “lively lunches” in particular. It was my first time attending the conference and coming from a developing country in the Caribbean, I gained a wealth of knowledge and exposure.

It was said that the Charleston Conference is considered a breeding ground for new visions, and this has proven, for me, to be a highly stimulating experience of new and fresh ideas! I now have more knowledge of the cutting-edge trends “in the business” and am now more equipped with new knowledge and confidence in my new role as a Serials and Information Studies and with the knowledge and vigor gained at the conference I am now able to contribute more effectively to the development of the Unit, the Library and the University of the West Indies on the whole. I have benefited immensely from other professionals and have gained new insights into the world of library work. I have also met some wonderful people and hopefully some lasting friends!

Thank you,

Elizabeth Cooke, Clerical Assistant Technical Services Unit, Main Library University of the West Indies, Mona Campus, St. Andrew, Jamaica <elizabeth.meghoo@uwimona.edu.jm>

AGAINST THE GRAIN DEADLINES
VOLUME 20 — 2008–2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2008 Events</th>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Ad Reservation</th>
<th>Camera-Ready</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SLA, ALA Annual</td>
<td>June 2008</td>
<td>04/16/08</td>
<td>04/30/08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference Publishing</td>
<td>September 2008</td>
<td>07/16/08</td>
<td>07/30/08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charleston Conference</td>
<td>November 2008</td>
<td>09/03/08</td>
<td>09/17/08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALA Midwinter</td>
<td>Dec. 08/Jan. 09</td>
<td>10/29/08</td>
<td>11/19/08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

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Address: 291 Tower Drive, Saline, MI 48176.

Rumors from page 1

Knight. R-U-Rah-Rah and thank goodness for ESPN!” Mary says the most stable contact point for her right now is <mary.page@gmail.com>. Congratulations, Mary! Wa-ho-wa! Oops! That’s a UVA cheer!

More congratulations are in order – to Rick Anderson who has just been elected as Vice-President/President-Elect of NASIG and to Bob Boissy, Virginia Taffurelli and Sarah George Wessel as Members at Large.

Gordon Tibbitts has been named President and CEO by Berkeley Electronic Press. Tibbitts comes to bepress after seven years as President of Blackwell Publishing. Tibbitts first entered the publishing field in 1980 as Director of Information Systems at Aster Publishing (later Advanstar), before moving to the Thomson Corporation in 1993, where he served as a vice-president until 1999. He holds a BS degree in Computer Science and an MBA from the University of Oregon. In addition to his 25 years of experience at major publishing firms, Tibbitts is a founder and board chair of CLOCKSS and board member of LOCKSS, and has served on the Google publishing advisory board and as an advisor to ScholarOne and Atypion Systems, Inc. He frequently speaks and moderates at publishing, library, and technology meetings. Founded by professors in 1999, Berkeley Electronic Press is both a publisher of peer-reviewed electronic journals and a software developer, having created Digital Commons, a hosted institutional repository that powers the University of California’s eScholarship Repository, and those of over fifty other universities, societies, and other organizations.

www.bepress.com/
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If you are interested in leading a discussion, acting as a moderator, coordinating a lively lunch, or would like to make sure we discuss a particular topic, please let us know. The Charleston Conference prides itself on creativity, innovation, flexibility, and informality. If there is something you are interested in doing, please try it out on us. We’ll probably love it...

The Conference Directors for the 2008 Charleston Conference include — Beth Bernhardt, Principal Director (UNC-Greensboro) <beth_bernhardt@uncg.edu>, Glenda Alvin <galvin@1ststate.edu>, Cris Ferguson (Furman University) <cris.ferguson@furman.edu>, David Goodman <dgoodman@princeton.edu>, Chuck Hamaker <crahamake@email.uncc.edu>, Heidi Horrman <hoorman@sc.edu>, Tony Horava <horava@sottawa.ca>, Ramune Kubilius (Northwestern Health Sciences Library) <r-kubilius@northwestern.edu>, Corrie Marsh <cmarsh12@hotmail.com>, Heath Miller (SUNY-Albany) <hmiller@uamail.albany.edu>, Jack Montgomery (Western Kentucky University) <jack.montgomery@wku.edu>, Audrey Powers (UFFS Tampa Library) <apowers@lib.usf.edu>, John Perry Smith (Total Information Inc.) <jps@totalinformation.com>, Anthony Watkinson (Consultant) <anthony.watkinson@btopenworld.com>, Katina Strauch (College of Charleston) <kstrauch@comcast.net> or www.katina.info/conference.

Send ideas by July 31, 2008, to any of the Conference Directors listed above.

Or to: Katina Strauch, MSC 98, The Citadel, Charleston, SC 29409
843-723-3536 (voice) 843-805-7918 (fax) 843-509-2848 (cell)
<kstrauch@comcast.net> http://www.katina.info/conference

Rumors from page 6

From Peter Suber’s Open Access News (Fri., March 7, 2008) – Jan Velterop is leaving his position as Open Access Director at Springer to become the CEO of KnewCo Inc. Velterop is one of the most prominent figures of the open access community. He joined Springer in August 2005 from BioMedCentral, an established open access biomedical research publisher, where he was Publishing Director. Springer will continue to develop Open Choice and remains committed to growing the share of articles published using open access. KnewCo is the company behind the OA WikiProfessional project, which has already launched WikiProteins. From the KnewCo mission page, KnewCo, mined to mind — “KnewCo mined data would no longer be (only) text per se, but rather the first nuggets of embryonic knowledge, i.e., Knowlets, which is computer readable and is associated with the relevant experts as a stepping stone to new knowledge. Helicopter views on knowledge domains are an essential and long overdue element of the scientific process.”

www.earlhkm.edu/~peters/jos/2008/03/jan-velterop-leaves-springer-for-knewco.html

www.knewco.com/mission.html

www.knewco.com

HighWire Press has made two key strategic staff additions. Joining the team are Domnic Mitchell, who will establish HighWire’s first fulltime European presence in his role as UK-based Journal Manager. Domnic is based in London and will help to expand local publisher support from within the European time zone. For the past eight years, Dom has been the online development manager with the BMJ Publishing Group, dealing directly with HighWire as technical liaison for their collection of 26 online journals. Xenia Prionas Siller, HighWire’s newest Technical Manager, will be a vital part of HighWire’s expansion of products and services. HighWire is already building on the flexible new H2O platform to create new product lines as well as publisher toolkits. Xenia will be participating in a variety of initiatives related to this growth. Prior to joining HighWire, Xenia Siller worked for Atypon Systems for eight years in program management, client services, and software development. Xenia’s extensive experience in electronic hosting technologies as well as her outstanding success working with scholarly publishers makes her the ideal candidate to lead HighWire’s new initiatives. HighWire’s new electronic publishing platform, H2O, debuted in March 2008 with the public beta release of the new Proceedings of the National Academy Website (beta.pnas.org). With the expertise of their current and new highly experienced e-publishing experts staff, HighWire will be expanding its books and other non-journal content systems to facilitate the hosting of HighWire’s publishers’ collections on a larger scale.

highwire.stanford.edu

SPARC, in partnership with SPARC Europe and SPARC Japan/National Institute of Informatics will hold the SPARC Digital Repositories Meeting 2008, November 17-18, 2008 at the Renaissance Harborplace Hotel in Baltimore, Maryland. Coming on the heels of two groundbreaking developments – a recent vote by Harvard’s Faculty of Arts and Sciences enabling the university to offer access to their articles in an institutional repository and implementation of a new National Institutes of Health public access policy – the meeting will enable stakeholders to explore next steps for the burgeoning open archiving movement. Members of the 2008 Program Committee include: Jun Adachi (SPARC Japan), Raym Crow (SPARC), Richard Fryfe (Grinnell College), Susan Gibbons (University of Rochester), Melissa Hagemann (Open Society Institute), Karla Hahn (Association of Research Libraries), Bill Hubbard (SHERPA), Rick Johnson (SPARC), Michelle Kimpton (DSpace) continued on page 10
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Rumors
from page 8

Foundation), Norbert Lossau (Goettingen State and University Library and DRIVER), Joyce Ogburn (University of Utah), Terry Owen (University of Maryland, College Park), Kathleen Shearer (Canadian Association of Research Libraries), Alma Swan (Key Perspectives Ltd.), Sean Thomas (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), Susan Veldsman (eIFL), and Charles Watkinson (The American School of Classical Studies at Athens). This is the first North American SPARC digital repositories conference since the organization’s popular 2004 meeting.

www.arl.org/sparc/meetings/ir08/

Companies
www.arl.org/sparc

Project MUSE has revealed plans for a significant redesign of its Web presence. The launch date for the new site design is August 2008; preliminary screens and more information will be shared at the American Library Association’s annual conference in Anaheim, CA, in late June. Among the goals of the redesign are more intuitive navigation among and within both content and informational pages, compatibility with emerging Web standards, support for selected Web 2.0 functionality, and an enhanced online experience for users and librarians utilizing MUSE in teaching and research. Prior to the main site redesign launch in August, some new features will be rolled out in the intervening months. Specifically, some MUSE journal articles will begin appearing in a new format during the month of August. The appearance and layout of the article page have been enhanced to provide users with more functionality and more information specific to the article, such as its DOI and the LCSH (Library of Congress Subject Headings) assigned to an article. Initially, the new design will apply only to newly-produced journal issues/articles; older articles will be gradually converted to the new look over the next 18 months. As conversion of back articles progresses, users may see both old and new formats for articles in their search results. Currently, the new format applies only to the HTML version of articles; a new PDF format will launch with the main site design in August. The advance launch of the new article design is happening in part to coincide with a new XML production process at MUSE, which is expected to increase efficiency and create opportunities for expanded functionality.

muse.jhu.edu

BioOne has released a model publication agreement that addresses current trends in copyright assignment and requirements by NIH and other funding agencies for digital repository deposits. While the Agreement was developed at the request of several BioOne publishers, it may be of interest to any scholarly publishing organization that is seeking a clear, concise, and legally vetted publication agreement. Provided on pro bono legal assistance to BioOne, the agreement was developed by the legal firm Morrison & Foerster LLC. The resulting agreement allows author(s) to retain copyright, while granting the publisher both a temporally limited and exclusive right to first publish, and a perpetual, non-exclusive right to publish, distribute, and sublicense. In response to NIH’s Public Access Policy (passed by Congress in December 2007) and other institutional and subject repository deposit mandates, the Agreement allows authors to deposit their work in digital repositories directly, or permits the publisher to deposit to the National Library of Medicine on their behalf. The final Agreement is freely available on the BioOne Website at:

www.bioone.org

www.mofo.com

Thomson Scientific and Ringgold have announced the availability of Journal Analysis Database Expanded (JADE), which allows users to see a detailed analysis of authors and subscribers of a journal or set of journals, using precisely defined definitions of the “publishing institutions” to which those authors and subscribers belong. Created to ensure accurate records for each publishing institution, JADE uses the journal analysis capabilities of Thomson Scientific and combines them with Ringgold’s Open Identify database which includes nearly 100,000 institutions that subscribe to academic journals. JADE will initially be a custom product tailored to the individual requirements of publishers or institutions. The client will receive a custom database which pulls together all the institutions that have authored, cited, or been cited by journal title or ISI subject category.

scientific.thomson.com/products/solutions/publishers/

www.openrfp.com

www.ringgold.com

Just received the latest Choice magazine (April 2008) by snail mail. Yes, we get it online and, yes, we get Choice on cards, but, you know what, I really like the print issue. I can read it in the order I want, I can fold the cover back and drink a cup of coffee, I can mark the books I want to order, I can carry it around anywhere I want. I know I’m an old fogy, but that’s the way I feel. And this time I read Irv Rockwood’s (editor and publisher, <irvrockwood@ala-choice.org>)...
great editorial about Choice’s big move to new quarters. It has involved cooperation and support from ALA, ACRL, and Choice. Irv says they will be moving into a brand new, 7,600 square foot condominium on the top floor of the Liberty Square Building in downtown Middletown, Connecticut, about two blocks from their old digs. They are excited since they will have a conference room, wireless Internet access, more private offices, and generally more space. The move is scheduled for late 2008 or early 2009. Having just moved into a new library building over two years ago, I know how exciting it must be for Choice! We will wait for updates!

What do editors do? Here’s an example. Got an article for this issue from the wonderful Aline Soules (be sure and read it, this issue, p.18). Anyway, she quotes a poem that as it happens I had just quoted to James Williams, our head of Circulation and big computer techie the other day — “There once was a little girl/she had a little curl right in the middle of her forehead, and when she was good she was very very good but when she was bad she was horrid.” How about if you substitute “computers” instead of the little girl (of course we have to figure out what to do with the little curl). But, I digress. Our referees read this paper but when yours truly read it, I was surprised to see the poem attributed to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow who I did not think wrote this poem (seems sort of atypical to me). Anyway, sitting at my trusty computer, I put in the words to the poem expecting to find the answer quickly. And I did except that, alternately, the poem was attributed to Longfellow, Mother Goose, Ralph Waldo Emerson with a mention of Mae West’s version (When I’m good, I’m very, very good. When I’m bad, I’m better.) and many others. I longed for a good, solid resource on the real author of this poem. And voila! According to Best Remembered Poems edited by Martin Gardner (Dover Publications 1992 cited in The Columbia Granger’s Index to Poetry (12th ed, 2002), the source is Longfellow (as Aline says). But also according to Granger’s there is also a version of this poem in countless editions of Mother Goose. Okay, so this is just an insignificant problem, but it took me close to half an hour to unravel it. And now I am curious to look at all print versions of the poem plus I wonder who wrote the very first version. Ah! The life of an editor! Always interesting and fun. And this escapade for the little girl makes Aline’s article and comments even more relevant! See among other sites on the Web: http://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20061114115208AAU9MbhX.

Did I tell you that one of the most interesting books I read recently was a biography of Alexander Graham Bell (Reluctant Genius: Alexander Graham Bell and the Passion for Invention) by Charlotte Gray (New York: Arcade Pub., 2006)? Anyway, reading Neldina Tchanganova’s essay, “My Love of Books: Source of Life Support” underlines the importance of books. See this issue, p.52.

Just returned from the Tenth Fiesole Retreat in Fiesole, Italy. We do printed Profile booklets for the Retreat. Something I have always wanted to do with the Charleston Conference except it’s hard to compile 1,000 profiles (unless we have a Charleston Conference version of Facebook). Moving right along, with this Retreat, it seemed like more and more people were talking about flying and the problems and “queues” associated with the aforementioned air travel. And Bob Nardini has some of the same issues except he turned it into much more. Read about Thomas Dawes and the Cycyles, this issue, p.81. And, PS, lots of the profiles from the Fiesole Retreats are loaded up on the Fiesole Retreat Website www.casalini.it/retreat/.

Just learned that the quietly capable Fyton Rowland of Loughborough University has written a report on the Fiesole Retreat in the UKSG Serials-eNews. www.ringgold.com/UKSG/st_pd.cfm?AC=4195&Pid=10&Zid=3701&issueno=167

And someone recently made the statement “Standards Impede Creativity.” (No, I’m not going to tell you who even if I did remember.) But, reading Todd Carpenter’s column in this issue seems to promise to add more creativity to the process with “thought leader” sessions. See this issue, p.83.

The U.S. Senate has confirmed four presidential nominees to serve as members of the National Museum and Library Services Board. The board advises the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), an independent federal agency that is the primary source of federal support for the nation’s museums and libraries. The Institute’s able Director is Anne-Imelda M. Radice. New Board members are: Julia W. Bland, Executive Director of the Louisiana Children’s Museum, Jan Cellucci, Commissioner on the U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, William J. Hagena, Chairman, Board of Directors of the Chicago Horticultural Society, and Mark Y. Herring, Dean of Library Services, Winthrop University and ATG regular columnist! The National Museum and Library Services Board (NMLS) is a twenty-four member advisory body that includes the IMLS director and deputy directors for libraries and museums and 20 presidentially-appointed and Senate-confirmed members of the general public who have demonstrated expertise in, or commitment to, library or museum services. Informed by its collective experience and knowledge, the NMLS advises the IMLS director on general policy and practices, and on selections for the National Medal for Museum and Library Service. www.imls.gov/about/board.shtm.

And, speaking of Mark (above), did you see the recent article in The Charlotte Observer, March 29, 2008? The title is called “Champion of Reading – Winthrop’s library dean crusades for old-fashioned books” by Jeri Krentz. Featured in the article are Mark’s article in American Libraries — “10 Reasons Why the Internet Is No Substitute for a Library” as well as his poster “10 reasons,” his book Fool’s Gold (McFarland). And, guess what, yours truly and Against the Grain are also mentioned! This is a great celebration of books and reading. I highly recommend it! Be sure and read the article! www.charlotte.com/146/story/577047.html

See also www.ala.org.

And don’t miss Mark’s article on IRs, this issue, p.77.

Did you know that the NCSU Libraries have recently become the first library in North America to acquire the complete set of China Academic Journals (CAJ) available from East View Information Services. Portions of East View’s Chinese journal continued on page 16
collection have previously been available at a few American universities, but NC State now offers access to the entire range of 7,200 journals, encompassing more than 23 million full-text articles.

www.lib.ncsu.edu/
www.eastview.com

Despite everything he has on his plate, the incredible Bryan Carson <bryan.carson@wk.edu> managed to complete his column Legally Speaking for the April Against the Grain. The column is about the Legal Concept of Privacy. Bryan is always right on point, isn’t he? And let’s wish him luck! He has his comps for his Ed.D in Higher Ed. Leadership & Policy from Vanderbilt University coming up in May, 2008. Bryan says he also has to complete a consulting project with a real client instead of a dissertation. He expects to graduate in May, 2009 “with more degrees behind [his] name and more gray in his already thinning hair.” BUT – he is still planning on writing for ATG. And he is going to attend ALA in Anaheim this summer! Whew! What a roller-coaster life!

And the awesome Elaine Robbins (see her review of The Informed Librarian Online, this issue, p.54) is leaving the College of Charleston library for other environs – military environs! That’s right! Elaine is leaving the College for the Citadel where she will be a reference and instruction librarian. We will miss her but hope to continue to keep her in our ATG pages! Congrats, Elaine and good luck, especially saluting!

And I don’t think I told you that I was dismayed to learn that DVDs have region and country codes. They may be encoded so they will only play in a certain country of region. We just found out when a DVD we bought from Italy would not play on our machines. Gosh! Found this entry in Wikipedia which seems to be accurate. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/DVD_region_code

Also, see the ATG New Channel – www.against-the-grain.com.


The Op Ed in this issue – What is a Book? – is by David Lindley <David@aptitude.me.uk> who used to be with Couts. It builds on a talk David gave in the UK last year. David is now running a freelance creative agency for libraries in the UK.

This month’s Group Therapy poses the question about bringing faculty into the decision as to whether or not to eliminate all print subscriptions even for current issues of a journal. It was interesting to me that the other day I got a email from a faculty member in the History Department. We had dropped a print subscription to a journal and replaced it with the electronic version. He was pleading with us to reinstate the print journal AND to continue to keep the electronic journal. He had good reasons. We decided to reinstate the print. Of course, the low cost of the print title was a factor. For more perspectives on this issue, see Group Therapy, p.64.

Thank you for your interest, and we hope to see you in June for “The Google Effect – Part 2.” We’ll learn about trends in library Web pages, integrating the Google Scholar “database,” teaching Google Docs & custom search engines and collection development in business resources. We will also hear from two vendors, the first will discuss how Google has enhanced their Web presence, and the other will look at “The 21st Century Searcher!”

Endnotes

16 Against the Grain / April 2008

<http://www.against-the-grain.com>
and other Google products continue to develop, the usage of Google by Technical Services may increase or decrease, depending on the assessed value of the product. Much remains to be seen. It would be interesting to conduct future surveys of this type to find out what other interesting and creative ways there are to use Google in Technical Services. 🎧

Rumors from page 16

FeedYourPlayer.com. Reported in the Post & Courier (Charleston, SC), March 12, 2008, p.13B.

Talk about against the grain! Borders Group Inc. plans to reduce inventory in order to increase the number of titles it displays with the covers “face out.” Apparently, this is an approach that Wal-Mart has taken as well. I wonder if libraries should follow

continued on page 32

Carol H. Jewell

BORN & LIVED: Born in Brooklyn, NY, and lived in Chapel Hill, NC, and upstate New York.

FAMILY: Partnered with one daughter.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: Cataloging, subject access, and disability issues.

IN MY SPARE TIME I LIKE TO: Making and listening to music, laughing, and movies.

FAVORITE BOOKS: Anne of Green Gables and anything by Rumer Godden.

PET PEEVES/WHAT MAKES ME MAD: I hate it when people fail to use their turn signals!

PHILOSOPHY: “Inner beauty”

MOST MEANINGFUL CAREER ACHIEVEMENT: Earning my MLS while being a single parent, working full time, and not knowing how to drive! 🎧

Imperfect Tools: Google Scholar vs. Traditional Commercial Library Databases

by Julie Arendt (Morris Library, Southern Illinois University) <jarendt@lib.siu.edu>

Like every other resource that a library might offer, Google Scholar has strengths and limitations. Instead of rejecting Google Scholar because it does not do everything that the library or librarians do, Google Scholar should be accepted or rejected based on how well it assists in a particular step in information seeking. That step traditionally has been assisted by indexing and abstracting resources. In some circumstances Google Scholar is a better tool than the indexing and abstracting resources; in other circumstances it is not. This article examines the strengths and weaknesses of Google Scholar compared to subscription indexing and abstracting databases. It critiques college and university libraries’ continued use of subscription databases that fail to provide a clear advantage over Google Scholar.

When Google Scholar was introduced, it initially met with some praise and a fair amount of criticism from the library world. Both the praise and criticism generally were deserved. Unfortunately, early responses sometimes compared Google Scholar to the library as a whole or to an idealized vision of library databases’ rather than to the real, imperfect indexing and abstracting databases offered through the library. Some of the faults that early commentators found in Google Scholar included lack of a controlled vocabulary, lack of authority control, incomplete or uneven coverage depending on discipline, and time lags between publication and appearance in the database. These same faults could be pointed out for Web of Science, a venerable subscription database. Another criticism of Google Scholar was that its definition of “scholarly” includes materials that have not undergone peer review, so it may lead users to this unvetted material. Again, this criticism also could be leveled against a subscription database. For example, book reviews, editorials and commentaries regularly appear in search results from Academic Search Premier, even when the search is limited to scholarly (peer reviewed) journals. Instead of comparing Google Scholar to the ideal resource, a fairer comparison would be to actual subscription databases.

Some evaluations have explored whether a subscription database produces better results than Google Scholar. When librarians conduct test searches using advanced search features in library databases, they get somewhat better results with the database than with Google Scholar. When college students conduct the searches, the advantage for the subscription database evaporates. The sources students find from Google Scholar are as good as or better than those found through the library’s databases. For these novice users, often subscription databases do not provide a clear advantage over Google Scholar.

Librarians may be able to use controlled vocabularies to produce more precise results from a database than from Google Scholar or to find special materials that could not be found through Google Scholar, but library patrons are not librarians. Simply having a controlled vocabulary or special materials is not good enough for a novice user. If users cannot figure out the controlled vocabulary or find the special materials, they cannot experience these supposed advantages. For there to be a clear advantage of a subscription database over Google Scholar, novice users should be able to complete their work more easily with the subscription database than they can with Google Scholar. Many subscription databases provide a clear advantage by simplifying access to special materials or by leveraging their controlled vocabularies. The interface designs that highlight subject terms next to results sets, such as those in EBSCOhost and Engineering Village, should be commended for their effort to guide novices to controlled vocabularies without interrupting users’ searches. Some databases and interfaces simplify users’ work in other ways. For example, Web of Knowledge provides citation assistance through EndNote Web, and full-text resources like JSTOR provide easy access to complete documents.

continued on page 28
Like the earlier E-Government Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-347), the new bill assigns the responsibility for policy, guidance and oversight to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA). In my opinion, the current policy in OMB Circular A-130 “Management of Federal Government Information” already covers the search capabilities provision by directing agencies to “use electronic media and formats, including public networks, as appropriate and within budgetary constraints, in order to make government information more easily accessible and useful to the public.”

At the December 11, 2007 Senate Committee hearing on “E-Government 2.0: Improving Innovation, Collaboration, and Access,” Karen Evans, Administrator of the Office of Electronic Government and Information Technology at OMB, reported on the progress the government has made in getting services and information online and available to citizens. One avenue is USA.gov,6 the official U.S. Government Internet portal and centralized point of entry for locating government information, benefits, and services. In FY 2007, USA.gov received approximately 97 million visits during the year or 1.87 million visits per week.

At the same hearing, John Lewis Needham, Google’s Manager for Public Sector Content Partnerships, testified that: “The government produces a lot of information and these databases cannot be navigated by Web crawlers.” Needham correctly stated that the most prevalent technical barriers to search engine access to “deep Web” government information are: (1) agency use of dynamic query-based databases, (2) Robots.txt. files that prevent crawling and (3) outdated links.

Needham also opined that “agencies are concerned more about how information is presented than if users are finding it.” The fact is that agencies are concerned about both. To meet reporting requirements and scorecards, Government agencies want the searching public to readily discover, recognize, and choose the agency as their preferred trusted and authoritative information provider.

Rumors from page 26

suit? In fact, I was in some airport or other the other day and walked into a bookstore. I noticed right away that all the books were displayed “face out.” I don’t know if I like it or not, do you? See – “Borders tries about-face in shelf space display.” by Jeffrey A. Trachtenberg, The Wall Street Journal, 3/12/2008. yorkdispatch.inyork.com/d/business/ci_8572433 online.wsj.com/article/SB120528554163329183.html?mod=yahoo_hs

continued on page 36

Seek and Ye Shall Find?
The premise of the proposed legislation is that if agencies make their data searchable, it will be indexed and discoverable. Hear ye, citizens, seek and ye shall find. Well, maybe. It depends on where you search, what you are searching for, and how you are searching.

Most search engine users expect and accept that they must sort through a large amount of material, much of it irrelevant to their purpose. To aid users in narrowing results, Google and other search engines offer options that limit a search to material types such as images, video, maps, news, and books or by specific interest groups such as Scholar and Finance. Google also offers a U.S. Government option7 that searches U.S. federal, state and local government domains and sites; but this option resides under “Special Searches” and is not readily apparent to most Google users.

If agencies do apply sitemap or another indexing standard, will search engines rank the federal government information higher in search results? The answer is “No.” Google states in its Public Sector Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) that “implementing sitemaps does not affect the ranking of a Webpage in search results.”8

The answer to the FAQ “What pages will Google index? Will they appear in Google.com or Google’s US Government Search?” is both a disclaimer and business policy. Google “cannot guarantee that we’ll include all pages that we crawl on your agency’s Website in our index. However, we’ll include all pages we believe are relevant to our users, so that they appear in search results of Google.com and Google’s US Government Search, as well as other Google services.”

Instead Google assesses relevancy based on its PageRank technology. Donna Bogatin in her January 26th, 2007 ZDNet post “Google search PageRank excludes relevant Websites” observes that “By requiring that Web pages have inbound links from third-party Web sites, the PageRank based algorithm may result in automatic exclusion of the most relevant pages for a given query simply because no other Websites have linked to them.”9 You’ll have to take it on faith, but there is a lot of esoteric and eclectic government information that only a few, if any, would seek or need to find.

We also need to keep in mind that Google and other search engines are commercial enterprises, not public utilities. Barbara Frist’s description of the search engine business model is: “Google gets content for free, gives it away for free, and makes its money by being an enormous distribution channel for everything from physics research to 19th century scanned books to the latest YouTube video.”10 Content is a means to an end. In 2007, Google had 57% of the market share and reported 4th quarter revenue of $4.83 billion, a 50% increase over 2006. AdSense revenue increased 30%, amounting to $1.45 billion of the total. Business operations and revenue-generating advertising partnerships, not altruism, factor into page ranking.

As I said earlier, when federal agencies have taken the initiative to open deep Web databases, commercial search engines do not always rank the government-source content above commercial or for-fee suppliers. The page rank depends on what, where and how one searches. I offer the experience of my agency as an example.

continued on page 34
did in an open intellectual property environment also struggle with copyright/copyleft management and have developed tags to document their decisions. As diligent as they are, it’s no surprise that wiki editors and contributors do not always get it right in assessing the copyright of U.S. Government information.

Conclusion

Rather than legislating search capabilities, citizens might be better served if the Government would mandate a system-neutral method to unambiguously identify government information and its copyright status. Visual icons and machine-readable tags would tell users (1) that the information is from a government source and (2) if there are any intellectual property considerations or use constraints. The identifiers could be applied to all materials in all formats (paper, physical media, digital, datasets, software, etc.), across domains and no matter the dissemination channel. In the digital environment, search engines and successor technologies could factor in the tags to elevate the government information ranking or as a criteria to narrow a search by usage rights ala Creative Commons.

Although the intent is different, the Government Printing Office (GPO) has a pilot program underway to identify, mark and certify the integrity of government information it disseminates. The system uses digital signature technology and adds a visible icon or “Seal of Authenticity” to assure users that the content is authoritative. The iconic graphic is an eagle next to the words “Authenticated U.S. Government Information.”

We could all benefit if Government agencies would mark the copyright status of their information products at the time of creation or acquisition. As Clifford Lynch points out: “There’s a difference between viewing the presence of tags as conclusive positive information and being able to count on the absence of a tag as negative information.”

Models, methods, technologies and tools exist to implement a marking system. What we need is the mandate to do it.

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Additional Information

E-Gov : The Official Website of the President’s E-Government Initiative — http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/egov/


Rumors

Did you know that Old Dominion University has taken the next step in educational outreach with the creation of an ODU YouTube channel? The channel hosts videos featuring various aspects of the university, including academics and faculty, campus life, distance learning and athletics. Among the current videos featured are faculty spotlights, an ONFilm Festival promo, virtual tours of forthcoming athletic facilities and even a helicopter tour of the campus. ODU created the channel in partnership with the commonwealth of Virginia and in keeping with Gov. Timothy Kaine’s technology initiative. YouTube is providing the channel and technical assistance free of charge, and there will be no advertising on the ODU channel. The “enhanced” channel will allow for unlimited content as part of the university’s relationship with YouTube.


continued on page 85

Endnotes


21. Creative Commons. www.creativecommons.org


60 percent admitting to copying the work of other scholars (see Paul Mooney’s “Plagued by Plagiarism” in The Chronicle for Higher Education for more on this topic). Whether the changes vowed by Peking University administrators and other Chinese academic officials — including threats of firing and the creation of a master database of plagiarism charges — adequately address the international audience’s wariness of Chinese scholarship will take some time to assess.

How will the scholarly communication adapt to the Chinese influence? What will the composition of academic content creators and consumers look like in a decade’s time? How will standards and expectations change in the face of a more diverse author base? These are fascinating questions I hope to revisit in these pages frequently. I am certain I am not the only one with a vested interest in how this all plays out.

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Technology Left Behind
from page 84

Sparta Public Library is certainly in the spotlight as a result of this innovative (and potentially legally inflammatory) move. Lapsley says she has been interviewed by both American Libraries and the New York Times in the last month, not to mention the two already published write-ups in Library Journal. I checked back with Lapsley at the end of March; despite all of the press, she says she has not heard a thing from Amazon to date, and she prefers it that way. As Francine Fialkoff, Editor-in-Chief of LJ, recently pointed out in an editorial in the March 1, 2008 issue, “[If Amazon is smart, Sparta won’t hear from them].” Fialkoff goes on to explain, “As lenders of hardware and software, including downloadable audiobooks and eBooks and their various players, libraries help promote the very companies that would prevent these same libraries from disseminating their products.”

If you are not prepared to flout Amazon and their attorneys, there may be applications for the Kindle within a library setting without actually circulating the device or the content. In the Winter 2008 issue of netConnect, Christopher Harris floats the idea of a librarian offering roaming reference services equipped with a Kindle, which already includes a dictionary and access to Wikipedia and could be loaded with additional reference resources from the Kindle store.

Want your own Kindle? Good luck!

Kindles have been sold out since almost the moment they went on sale. If you want a Kindle, Amazon recommends ordering now to reserve your place in line. I tried to get my hands on a Kindle for the purposes of this column. Unfortunately, I am as deep on the waiting list for a Kindle as anyone else is, and I could not find a library willing to interlibrary loan a Kindle to me. (The next time I have a baby I am putting a Kindle on the registry.) There are Kindles to be had on eBay, but there is a price to pay. While Amazon retains them for $399, at the end of March Kindles were selling on eBay for upwards of $500.

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Note from the Author: My thanks to Diane Lapsley of Sparta Public Library. I would be interested in hearing a publisher’s perspective on Kindle and their applications in libraries. If you are a publisher whose content is available for download to the Kindle, and you would be willing to be interviewed for a future issue of Against the Grain, please contact me, <cris.ferguson@furman.edu>.

References


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Rumors
from page 36

BIG ANNOUNCEMENT! We have been having trouble for some reason with our Conference electronic mailing list. Some of you may have received messages that you were deleted from the list. Be assured that we are working on this problem and you will NOT be deleted from the list. If you have questions please write me <kstrauch@comcast.net>; or David Lyle <david@katina.info>. We are sorry for this, but, hey, you know computers!

And, finally, that’s it for now! Have you gotten your username and password for the ATG News Channel? Many Rumors were already posted there and some are there that are not in the print edition. Check it out or contact me or David (above) if you have issues or problems. www.against-the-grain.com

Much love and see you all in print in June or virtually anytime! Yr. Ed. 🍀