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Retention of Print

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Retention of Print

by Rosann Bazirjian (Assistant Dean for Technical & Access Services, University Libraries, The Pennsylvania State University, 507 Paterno Library, University Park, PA 16802-1812; Phone: 814-865-0404; Fax: 814-865-3665) <rvb9@psuilias.psu.edu>

I am pleased to be serving as Guest Editor of this issue of Against The Grain. Katrina first asked me, nearly a year ago, if I would consider editing an issue on whether or not we should discard print titles in favor of electronic. I agreed, knowing that there would be no shortage of excellent papers on this particular topic. And I was right! This issue of ATG will showcase five thoughtful and creative papers on this topic.

Thomas Peters addresses this issue from the consortia perspective. He describes three collaborative print retention pilot projects (Committee on Institutional Cooperation, Center for Research Libraries, University of California System). Tom claims that the challenge with print retention is to manage a large body of printed information that appears to be losing value to the user population.

John McDonald focuses his paper on the considerations that libraries should take into account when debating print retention issues. When considering the benefits of not returning print issues of journals that are available electronically, librarians must examine “money,” “time,” and “space.” In addition to these issues, a library must explore their archival responsibility, personnel needs, reputation and marketability. John concludes that the most important issue for a library to consider is to weigh its ability to restore books and other items that have been cancelled, to determine if there is ever a future need for them.

Mark Rose focuses on the evolving environment and its effect on the factors affecting the ratio of print to electronic collections. New purchasing and publishing models, user preferences, networked environments, and the larger issues of cost and budgeting, have created what he refers to as the “hybrid environment.” Duplication issues, storage, binding and space costs are also addressed in this paper.

Don Jaeger approaches this topic from the perspective of a vendor who believes that paper copy will prevail for at least the next fifty years. He feels this way because copyright issues surrounding electronic access still remain unresolved; there are unsettled technologies surrounding electronic; accreditation models at universities that still favor paper; publishers still derive a high percentage of income from print; and, archiving issues surrounding electronic access are still unresolved.

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If Rumors Were Horses

Look y'all, BACK TALK is back! See this issue, p. 94. In the meantime, Tony Ferguson, the magnificent, is currently president of the Hong Kong Library Association, head of the Pacific Rim Digital Library Alliance, chair of the collaborative collection development group, and to mention lots of other things I don't know about as well as head of the Hong Kong University Library and Back Talk extraordinaire. Whew!

I am so sorry that I neglected to tell y'all that the wonderful Alfred Jaeger had two sons! Glenn Jaeger, President of Absolute Backorder Service, Inc. <jaeger@absolute-inc.com> in Wrentham, MA was his second beloved son.

Well, y'all, if you notice something that I have left out of Rumors that you wish I had put in, PLEASE tell me <strauchk@emailink.net>.

Like, I totally forgot to tell y'all about the acquisition of Norman Ross Publishing by ProQuest back in November, 2002! Oops! NRP (originally operating as “Clearwater Publishing”), with approximately 22 employees, has been producing microfilms in more than 30 countries for the better part of 30 years. As part of the integration, both Robert Lee and Norman Ross have joined the ProQuest staff. Norman, operating out of New York, will serve as Executive Director of UMI. Robert, relocating to Ann Arbor, formerly Vice President of NRP, is Director of UMI Publishing, with responsibilities for a wide range of microform and print products from both UMI and Norman Ross Publishing. The full content of NRP’s microform products will be integrated into appropriate subject disciplines within the UMI family of products. Norm writes, “After completing the sale of my company, I noted that the first trip of my business career, in 1965, was to visit the first microfilm operation of Bell & Howell, which today is known as ProQuest.” Sounds prophetic. http://www.nross.com/old/letter.htm

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Collaborative Print Retention Pilot Projects

by Thomas A. Peters (Committee on Institutional Cooperation)

Introduction
Although people have been retaining print since incunabula were printed, suddenly print retention is a hot topic. Reilly (2002) describes it as a "crisis in collection storage." DesRosiers (2002) notes, "Librarians are joining up with colleagues at neighboring institutions to develop joint collections, to undertake local digitization projects, to assign 'last copy' responsibilities among themselves and to develop joint storage or shelving facilities."

Why has print retention become one of the burning issues of our time? It reveals our current cultural schizophrenia. On the one hand, electronic publishing has made some educated people to re-evaluate the value of print. On the other hand, certain types of printed publications, such as reference books and scholarly journals, have become problematic for academic libraries. Kaufman (2002) notes, "...the artifacts of paper-based communication are piling up in our libraries and are becoming an even more expensive problem." Many users seem to prefer—or at least accept—electronic versions of some publications and notices, in a general practice for resources and space these value in an orderly retreat from printed journals. If not already the case, soon we may face situations where many libraries find themselves investing in print journal collections at levels out of kilter with the value and use their users place on printed information. Retaining print may become a dubious activity open to challenge from users, parent organizations, funding agencies, and fellow librarians.

Although everyone knows a printed document when they see one, the meaning of committing to retain a collection of printed documents is open to interpretation. The notions of light and dark archives come into play, as well as centralized and decentralized archives. The terms of commitment need to be articulated. The need for a coordinated print retention strategy is palpable. A report from the Center for Research Libraries Collection Assessment Task Force, chaired by Ross Atkinson from Cornell, notes, "The primary reasons for retaining paper copies will probably be (a) for occasional access to older materials that have never been digitized, (b) as paper backup (safety copies) of items that have been digitized, (c) for the opportunity to re-digitize materials, as needed, from the originals, and (d) for alternative purposes."

This article describes three projects involving collaborative attempts to address the print retention problem. All three focus on the orderly retention of printed versions of journals for which electronic versions exist.

Committee on Institutional Cooperation
In June 2000, discussions began in the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC) about developing policies for the retention of printed copies of journals available electronically. The Collection Development Officers and Electronic Resources Officers created a Format Delineation Task Force with the following goals: "Create a fair and reliable mechanism that will allow CIC libraries to cancel print copies of titles available in electronic format and assure one copy print of each title is retained in the consortium for research and archival purposes." Bonnie MacEwan (Penn State University) and Lou Pitschmann (then at the University of Wisconsin-Madison) initially led the group. Ed Shreeves (University of Iowa) and Carole Armstrong (Michigan State University) later took the lead.

In late 2000, Jan Palmer, a U. of Michigan post-doc, analyzed current practices, discussions, and policies regarding print retention at CIC member universities. When asked whether or not a CIC collaborative print retention project would make local decisions to cancel print subscriptions more feasible, the respondents indicated that a consortial initiative would be at least somewhat beneficial. One collection development officer, however, cautioned that faculty opposition to the remote storage or cancellation of printed journals could become inflamed by the added concept of sharing responsibilities with other CIC member universities.

In December 2001, a project proposal was submitted to the CIC Library Directors, with copies to the Technical Services Directors, Public Services Directors, the Preservation Officers, and the Interlibrary Loan Directors. The proposal noted that the archived of and long-term access to e-versions of scholarly journals were not sufficiently mature and robust. "The archiving of electronic versions..."