2005

People Profile: James Buczynski

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Recommended Citation
Editor (2005) "People Profile: James Buczynski," Against the Grain: Vol. 17: Iss. 6, Article 22.
DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.4604

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Vendors Begin to Address...

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ity experience. On campus, they want barrier free access to library resources via registered IP address ranges. Off campus, they expect consistent, easy authentication via their institutional network access username and password. Some vendors remain unable or unwilling to provide this type of access. Many products are solely available via a username and password set by the vendor. Libraries are challenged to disseminate the access information — for what can easily be hundreds if not thousands of products. Many community college collection policies forbid acquisitions of resources available this way, and scripted “screen-scraping” technical solutions to the username/password dissemination problem are problematic to maintain.

Username/password access is particularly frustrating for community colleges because they hold fewer subscriptions to “big deal” products. A large university provides access to hundreds of e-journal full-text products while a typical community college subscribes to less than 75 “big deal” products. The likelihood that any specific e-journal title will be accessible from a database already on subscription is significantly higher for university libraries than community college libraries. As a result, many community colleges license directly from the publisher, who often provides only username/password access. Titles aimed at practitioners or association members are particularly difficult to acquire for this reason.

There is an industry trend for publishers to opt out of licensing their content to third parties (aggregators). The idea is to go it alone to increase revenue. Unfortunately, many publishers assume that password/username access is adequate. Subscribers are taken for granted. The net result is that community college libraries shy away from their content in the marketplace.

While username and password access is sufficient for individuals, it is unreasonable for libraries. In addition to FTE based pricing models, this barrier is also blocking college libraries from migrating access to electronic Serials subscription agents like EBSCO, through services like EJS, can mitigate some of the access pain associated with single periodical titles, but a comprehensive solution remains elusive. Access models designed for corporate entities, such as access limited to specific workstations, are grudgingly accepted by academic libraries. Products accessed this way are considered for cancellation annually based on use or if a suitable alternative IP range accessible product exists.

Practitioner focused association publications are widely available in electronic form. Access, however, increasingly cannot be acquired by libraries. Newsletters previously published in print, for example, have moved to email subscriptions. Manuals and books are now exclusively sold as PDF files. Attempts to license hosting rights have rarely borne fruit thus far.

To answer the question, “Why don’t we have...?”, the publisher or vendor does not seem interested in selling to libraries. As mentioned earlier, in the late 1990’s the bottomless demand for electronic access gave vendors immense bargaining power. Products and their licensing terms and conditions were focused on increasing revenue per subscriber and gaining new subscribers. Given this power, vendors were able to force libraries to sign licenses that prohibited traditional uses of library materials. This is especially problematic in countries with narrow copyright exemptions. In Canada, for example, “fair dealing” does not include teaching situations, as “fair use” does in the U.S. The classroom is a de facto marketplace. Disseminating resources for teaching purposes requires permission and/ or a license for use. Transactional or blanket licenses from copyright collectives make it easy to legally make photocopies for classroom dissemination or noncommercial course packages. The collectives, however, continue to possess few, if any, electronic dissemination rights from their members.

Copyright collectives are of little help in the digital marketplace and transactional licensing with publishers directly is often cost prohibitive.

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