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View From New Zealand -- Mixed Media in Libraries

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The financial aspects of this model have yet to be fully worked out. As long as there is commercial interest among the publishers, articles are available on licence conditions. When demand declines for an article, it can be offered for free. Problems are foreseen, however, in the area of international electronic publications, which do not fall within the scope of a national library.

In a session on Strategic Change, Mark Seeley (Legal Counsel, Elsevier Inc.) illustrated how publishing functions are migrating far outside the traditional STM sector. Larger companies have invested in a variety of support systems, but the offerings of new entrants — some of them companies that used to provide back-office services for publishers — make us aware of the shifting roles of stakeholders. One central question is whether publishers should change their role. Some new services, like PatientInform, could easily be set up by publishers, but they will have to offer significant services to the community to stay competitive. On the other hand, it is not an easy task to develop easy-to-use systems.

In a Closing Panel discussion, chaired by Herman Spruijt (Royal Brill Academic Publishers and IPA), a general debate followed introductory statements by the three panelists. In his remarks, Dr. Albrecht Hauff (CEO of Thieme Verlag) expressed doubts as to whether a change from a competition-based publishing system to a state- or university-run system would bring the better; in his opinion the neutrality of publishers with regard to content is very important. Moreover, he stressed the importance of copyright protection and reminded the audience that lower levels of protection would discourage publishing activities, especially the scientific monograph. He thought it highly unlikely that OA publishing would lead to a reduction in costs, but reminded the audience that publishers must add value to the dissemination of science or they would become redundant. Dr. Renn of the MPG agreed with Hauff that added value and investment are necessary and that there is no reason why the future system should be less expensive. On the other hand, he felt that it would be beneficial for the publishing business to be guided by the most innovative and advanced scientists. He urged the publishing industry to shift their investments from conserving the old system to infrastructure and value-added services in innovative scientific activities.

Dr. Klaus Saur (Walter de Gruyter GmbH, Berlin) explained that publishers still play a very important role, but thinks this role is endangered by recent legislation and public funding policies. As a result of recent OA initiatives, he warned that many long-standing established publications may have to be discontinued. Unlike Renn he thinks that scientists do become competitors for publishers when they deliver all their content via OA channels. Saur thinks that these developments, combined with the budget reductions in libraries, will lead to a reduction in the quality of scientific information.

The ensuing general debate was largely driven by the issue of OA and a lively discussion revealed a wide spectrum of opinions. Renn reinforced his earlier championing of the OA model by stating that not only is information held in a closed system at the moment, but publishers are investing to keep it closed. This point was supported by Mathew Cockerill of BioMed Central, who stated that "OA is the only way to allow the full resources of academia to throw that creativity at finding the best ways to discover content and put that content in context." Stalman reiterates the point that if scientific societies were to adopt OA they would lose income that currently funds courses, congresses and fellowships, leaving European bio-scientists homeless and impoverished. In the best scenario, some of these activities might be taken over by, for example, the EU, but then scientists would have to face consequences that were eloquently stated by the physicist Sir Ernest Rutherford as long ago as 1926: "It is essential for men of science to take an interest in the administration of their own affairs, or else the professional civil servant will step in — and then Lord help you!"

In his closing statement, Herman Spruijt pointed out that OA business models should not be confused with the effects of digital distribution already achieved: scientists have at their fingertips more information immediately available than ever before and we have experience with more than one business model already. The question is now: Who in the information chain should pay the bill? There seems to be an agreement that more than one model can exist: and that an abrupt change is not the best solution for the academic community.

Despite all the energy and investments publishers are devoting to changing their role, if they are not seen as adding enough value and are not seen as proactive enough, authors, libraries and funding agencies will vote with their feet; technology is not the prerogative of publishers only but available to all players.

A full report on APE 2006, including the full conference programme and further details of the presentations and discussion is available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1477/5.814.
such good feedback from the students about the mixed media publication that they decided to abandon the book only edition. This title, undoubtedly a good one for students, was included in the reading lists as “Recommended reading.” The library guarantees to supply to students the titles on the reading list and as there was a book only edition available at the time it was possible for the library to do so. With the book only edition abandoned by the publishers and restricted access to the mixed media edition the problem is how to loan multiple students copies of the latter.

In the mixed media edition the Website access is limited to one paper copy and the book can not be used independently.

One possibility is for libraries to note the first login details and make them accessible to other students so that they can use the same when they borrow the book but it is not as simple as that. Most new software now identifies logins with the specific computer and this could well be the student’s own computer or a specific library computer in the library’s study area. This will help on campus students who visit the library but what about distance learning students who have remote access and delivery of library materials? Electronic resources and remote online access is a boon to the delivery of distance learning. Why is it that mixed media are restricted by one book one login? Particularly when the book has to be used along with the online material.

It is understandable that publishers want to maximize their profits by the sale of individual copies to students but why do they not think of marketing a library edition that includes multiple logins. At a time when electronic databases and journals have proved their worth, and when there is increased interest in eBooks particularly for remote delivery of learning materials it is surprising that multiple use of the mixed media publications have not been thought of. On the other hand if separate library editions are a serious impossibility, then publishers could work with the aggregators of eBooks to make these titles available via eBook collections.