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And They Were There -- Reports of Meetings -- Electronic Resources in Libraries Conference, SALALM Annual Conference, DigIn -- Digital Preservation Conference

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Dr. Bordeianu (Head, Print Resources Section, University Libraries, MSC05 3020, 1 University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM 87131-0001; Phone: 505-277-2645; Fax: 505-277-9813) <sbordeia@unm.edu>

Electronic Resources in Libraries — Georgia Tech Conference Center, Atlanta, Georgia, March 18-21, 2008.

Reported by Christine Nelson (University of New Mexico Libraries)

The third annual Electronic Resources in Libraries Conference took place on March 18-21 at the Georgia Tech Conference Center in Atlanta GA. The conference attracted around 300 participants and featured well attended presentations that fostered engaged discussions in an open and friendly venue. The conference thought cloud http://www.electroniclibraryian.org/tagcloud/ provided a nice visual of the topics that ER&L conference-goers were thinking about. Bonnie Tijerina is the creator and coordinator of the conference, and she facilitated a smooth experience which incorporated online registration, a conference blog and a post-conference survey. The event got started with a welcome reception at the Georgia Tech library. The atmosphere was casual and the reception showcased the wonderful Georgia Tech library reference area. There were also opportunities to meet other conference attendees at the vendor hosted reception on Wednesday evening and at signup dinners around Atlanta.

The opening keynote speaker for ER&L 2008 was Karen Coyle who worked for over 20 years at the California Digital Library and writes and speaks on libraries in the digital age. In “There’s no catalog like no catalog,” Karen gave a presentation on a study she conducted with Caime Lu that is supported by an IMLS award. In “An Analysis of Seven Metadata Creation Guidelines: Issues and Implications,” she presented seven guidelines to evaluate metadata across institutional repositories. The ultimate goal is to create metadata that is interoperable and searchable across repositories. Using semantic analysis of Dublin core elements and their descriptions, she discovered inherent conceptual ambiguities in the elements. In particular, she found that “provenance” was one of the most locally added and least understood elements. She made the case that DC needs to evolve into a less ambiguous metadata scheme.

Karen Rupp-Serrano, University of Oklahoma Libraries; Ana-Marie Braux, YBP Library Services; Cynthia Cleto, Springer; Renee Register, OCLC Cataloging and Metadata Services; Jacquie Samples, North Carolina State University Libraries, presented “Shooting Fish in a Barrel: If Only Providing Access Were that Easy.” The challenges of providing access to eBooks were explored from a variety of different angles in this presentation. In particular, the presenters focused on eBook standards and practices that would improve access to eBooks. The discussion resulted in a number of practical suggestions. For instance, eBooks need to work better with our current journal technology, especially with link resolvers and statistics methods. BookReport2, a COUNTER standard for eBooks is coming out, but much work needs to be done. Standardization is needed in how records are provided by publishers, and record and content updates could be provided via RSS feed. When publishers require a license for eBook records it erodes the cooperative cataloging model that OCLC is built on. It is important that metadata can be shared with OCLC. The group also discussed how these eBook records are created. The development of ONIX for eBook metadata and the PCC guidelines for vendor-created MARC records are two steps in the right direction. Finally, if the records are of low quality, libraries should be able to negotiate a lower price for the eBook package.

Sarah Bartlett-Talis, “Collaborative opportunities in Electronic Resource Management using new Web technologies.” Sarah gave an out-of-the-box and informative presentation on how Web 2.0 technologies can be used with ERMs to offer more collaboration and vision in our use of ERMs. One of the more interesting ideas that Sarah presented was the possibility that ERMs could employ an Amazon type rating system for resources across institutions, or within one institution, to aid in collection development. In addition, she talked about creating a shared knowledge base of publisher changes and other platform updates, created across or within institutions, to aid in keeping the ERM and A-Z lists current.

Ted Fons, Innovative Interfaces and Nancy Fleck, Michigan State University, presented “Discovery Value: Discovery Services and ERM Systems Together.” Ted and Nancy gave a nice overview of how ERMs and NextGen catalogs or “discovery service platforms” are evolving. They provided a framework for how ERMs, ILSSs, link resolvers, knowledge bases, etc. all work together to provide access to information.

Ken DiFiore, Portico, “Addressing the e-Journal Preservation Conundrum: Understanding Portico.” Ken presented Portico, a JSTOR product that archives content, but not format, from publishers. It’s centralized in Princeton, but stores copies around the world. Portico doubled in size (content stored) last year and continues to grow. The archive is committed to migrating data to current formats, and creates metadata records for each title using the METS/Premis standard. Access to the archive is opened by specific trigger events, such as a publisher dropping a title from its platform. Future efforts of Portico will be concentrating on harvesting content from smaller publishers, harvesting eBook content, preservation efforts for institutional repositories and digitized materials.

Wendy Robertson, University of Iowa, “Electronic Resources in a Next Generation Catalog.” Wendy gave a summary of the University of Iowa’s experience migrating to Primo. She detailed how they included data from the catalog, databases, the A-Z list, ContentDM and the library site. She discussed some of the issues involved in combining these various resources under one search, and gave an overview of their process of deduping and FRBRizing their records. One problem they have encountered is searching their Content DM records that have different formatting and standards than MARC records. They have not incorporated federated searching into Primo but because of its slowness. They have future plans to migrate data from LibGuides, LibraryThing, and their institutional repository. Overall, it has been a successful migration — library staff and patrons have provided positive feedback.

Jamene Brooks-Kieffer, Kansas State University, presented her ideas on “Why Unlock Your Link Resolver’s ‘Black Box’? The Answer Lies In Your Strategic Plan.” Jamene described a series of classes that she gave to library staff, faculty and students on the library’s SFX link resolver. The classes included games and prizes and were well attended. The end result was that reference and other front-line librarians were able to give better service to library patrons after learning how the link resolver works in more detail and learning the differences between true errors and other results. Jamene tied the impetus for these classes, as well as their result, to her library’s strategic plan.

Nancy Beals, Kelly Smith, Ranti Junus, Sarah Rhodes, Nathan Rupp, held a panel discussion about perpetual access titled “Continuing access to e-resources.” Concerns facing libraries regarding perpetual access were expressed by both the panel members and the audience. There was some discussion on the differences between fee-based publisher site perpetual access, locally hosted perpetual access, and archival access via third parties like LOCKSS and Portico. Intellectual property law and how it relates to perpetual access was also touched on. All in the room agreed that this is a major issue for libraries and that we have a long way to go.

Sarah Wessel, Illinois Wesleyan University, “User-centered Technical Support of E-resources.” Sarah gave an entertaining overview of different...
tools that today’s libraries can use to provide tech support for e-resources. She presented a diverse and creative list of tools that libraries can use to organize workflows and communicate and collaborate both within the library and with patrons — from FAQs to flip charts to checklists. She provided examples of best practices using such tools as “report a problem” links on the Website, ticket tracking systems, project management software, and collaborative space software. It was an idea-generating presentation that either reinforced how we in the audience use specific tools, or gave us new ideas to provide better tech support.

Oliver Pesch, EBSCO, “Gathering the data: A look at alternatives for populating ERMs.” This was an excellent presentation on how serials vendors, publishers and library staff can all work together to populate the 309 data elements in the ERM in increasingly consistent and automated ways. Oliver broke the data down by ERM field, explaining how each piece of data can be obtained — whether from the publisher or the vendor. Critical to automating this information is the ability for serials vendors, publishers and ERMs to develop their data so that this can be done through standardized XML dumps — the SUSHI protocol being one example. Initiatives toward data standardization that are coming together to make this possible were discussed, including SUSHI, ONIX SOH, Counter3, EDI for invoicing, and ONIX PL for license manipulation. Oliver also reported on a group called TRANSFER that is considering creating a repository of journals that have transferred publisher, changed titles, etc., in order to be able to keep that information up to date in the ERM. He provided an overview of EBSCO’s current and future role in these processes in this very clear look ahead to upcoming ERM changes.

The closing keynote was given by Tom Wilson, Associate Dean for Library Technology at the University of Alabama Libraries. He gave an engaging presentation on the myths and holdovers that libraries buy into, and he presented a vision of what we should be looking for from ourselves and from our vendors as the digital age matures. Please visit the Website for abstracts and full presentations of these sessions as well as the other presentations not reported on here at http://www.electroniclibrarian.org/. At the end of the conference, Bonnie Tijerina who is now the Digital Collections Services Librarian at UCLA, started a discussion about the next E&L Conference. She has been the organizer for the past three years and has asked the participants for feedback for the 2009 conference. Check the Website as plans develop.

SALALM Annual Conference

Reported by Claire-Lise Bénaud (University of New Mexico)

New Orleans was the perfect place to talk about “Encounter, Engagement and Exchange,” the theme of this year’s SALALM Annual Conference (Seminar on the Acquisition of Latin American Library Materials). It was hosted by Tulane University. New Orleans has always been a place of encounters and exchanges because of its port. Americans travelled North-South on the Mississippi River and by the mid-nineteenth century New Orleans was becoming a growing slave port. African slaves were brought there to work on the cotton and sugar plantations. Immigration continues today as a new wave of old settlers are moving into Post-Katrina New Orleans.

The conference had lots of committee meetings, panel presentations, business discussions between librarians and Latin American and Iberian book dealers, and special events (i.e., going to receptions and having a good time with your colleagues.) As usual, the first two days of the conference were devoted to committee meetings where participants reported on projects at their institutions, cooperative projects in their regions, problems, and in general conversed about their areas of librarianship. SALALM members are a close-knit group and many have been working together via this organization for years.

In the keynote lecture, Alfred Crosby, renowned scholar and activist, spoke of Native Americans as pioneers. He referred to them as “American Indians” because these very early Americans also came from elsewhere, in this case, they migrated from Siberia. With this rather unusual perspective of Native Americans as pioneers rather than “native,” Crosby discussed how these first Americans adapted to their new environment, how they settled it, and how they changed it. At the time of their migration, these early settlers were not practicing agriculture in Siberia. They learned how to grow maize in this new land, and maize became their preeminent agricultural mainstay. This very adaptable crop continues to grow all over the Americas today. William Balée, from Tulane, in the session entitled “Demography, Ethno-Botany and the Environment”, continued the agriculture theme with a question: Were there plantains in the New World before Columbus? Most scholars argue that plantains, which originated in Malaysia, were brought to the Americas by a Spanish Father in 1516. Balée argued that a type of plantain did exist in the Americas before 1492 because the word for plantain (“pacob” in Tupi-Guarani) was already in use. These discussions highlight the types of topics investigated by scholars regarding pre-discovery. Similarly, Peter Stenzel from UMass at Amherst, discussed another concept: How were people lived in the Americas before 1492? What was the decline of the population following the conquest? Consequently, what was the magnitude of the disaster? Or depending on one’s ideology, the crime committed. He reported on the ideas put forward by the “Berkeley School” of Cultural Geography, a group of scholars from Berkeley, who published their research in a series titled “Ibero-Americans.” He related how the Berkeley school’s methodology, used by researchers for decades, is being questioned today and, from my perspective, the number of them, how the concept incorporated biblical, Catholic, and indigenous themes. The Virgin, which is depicted as a mestiza woman, clearly has a Mexican identity rather than a Spanish identity. Consequently, the Catholic Church feared that the cult of the Virgin of Guadalupe encouraged idolatry and led indigenous people to practice their own version of Catholicism.

The panel “Accommodation, Resistance and Indian Rights,” included a session by Richard Phillips, from the University of Florida. Phillips discussed how the influential Peruvian writer Jose Carlos Mariategui (1895-1930) promoted indigenous Peruvian art in his journal Amata. This was avant-garde at the time. Philip MacLeod, from UC Irvine, discussed a century of warfare in Costa Rica (1560-1750) between Indians and Spaniards, how the Indians refused to feed and work for the Spaniards, how the Indians fought among themselves to control resources, and how ultimately, Spain tried to transform the Indian universe. Federico Zeballos, from the Universidad Nacional de Cordoba, Argentina, gave a very interesting talk on censorship in Cordoba between 1976 and 1983. He showed memos sent by the Argentine military dictatorship to libraries with lists of books to be removed from the stacks or to be destroyed. Some lists were short (19 books), some were more extensive (300 books). This methodological destruction was a local phenomenon which created a climate of fear (Cordoba was seen as a problematic city) by the military regime. His presentation included photographs of book burnings in army barracks from that time period.

The panel on the New World contribution to the arts was excellent. Two presenters discussed how art was sold to “cultural pilgrims.” Penny Morrill, independent scholar, gave a history of silver in the town of Taxco, particularly the influence of William Spratling, an American working at Tulane University who moved to Mexico in 1929. She explained how the silver jewelry industry developed, how designs were influenced by art in New Orleans and pre-Columbian art, how workshops functioned, how workers were treated, and how Americans flocked to Taxco. Audra Bellmore, from continued on page 73
the University of New Mexico, discussed a similar encounter between native and Anglo architecture in New Mexico. She specifically discussed how architect John Gaw Meem blended the two styles and how newcomers to New Mexico embraced this revival movement in early 20th century.

Finally, this conference offered a panel that was of special interest to librarians entering the field but which was also enjoyed by more seasoned librarians. In this very well attended panel, titled “Professional Development: Opportunities and Strategies” Anne Barnhart, from UC Santa Barbara, gave a “How To” motivational speech: how to get involved, how to create opportunities, how to spruce up your resume, how can a second job enhance your primary job, how to get your projects funded. She was uplifting and offered lots of practical tips.

It was good to see that New Orleans is still on the map, its culture and restaurants still vibrant. Next year’s SALALM will be held in another city that is reinventing itself, albeit on a different scale, Berlin. It will be hosted by the Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut (July 3-8, 2009). The theme for the Berlin Conference is “Migrations and Connections: Latin America and Europe in the Modern World.” New Orleans in 2008, Berlin in 2009, and Providence, Rhode Island in 2010, this global reach shows the world wide interest in Latin American collections.

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DigIn, Digital Preservation Conference — University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM, June 4-6, 2008

Reported by Claire-Lise Bénaud (University of New Mexico)

The University of New Mexico hosted the New Mexico Digital Preservation Conference called DigIn, in Albuquerque, June 4-6, 2008. The conference was sponsored by the Rocky Mountain Region section of the National Archives. Every topic at this conference had an “e” in front of it: e-records, e-preservation, email, e-commerce, e-trade, and e-participation in social networks. The theme of the conference was how to capture, store, and retrieve digital assets, those born digital, as well as digitized objects. This proves to be an elusive goal for libraries, archives, and governments as they are trying to catch up with technology. June 4 was devoted to a pre-conference, which I did not attend, followed by two days of presentations, with no concurrent meetings. This was an eye-opening conference as many librarians and archivists are not aware of what research is being conducted in the field of digital preservation. The conference focused on research rather than on “how I done it right.” Speakers fell into two categories: very engaging and able to relate to non-techies, and very technical and loosing part of the audience (including myself). But still, enlightening.

Richard Pearce-Moses, from Arizona State University, discussed how librarians and archivists, as they move from flat documents to e-records, need to redefine their jobs, cross boundaries and become IT professionals. This radical change from paper to electronic also signifies a shift in power from librarians to IT professionals (another speaker confirmed that we need a new profession, archival engineer). Pearce-Moses lamented that there is a disconnect between research and practice. Research continues to focus on academic and theoretical issues while in practice, archivists are in a state of denial and avoidance of e-records, are procrastinating, and have no clear best practices. He recommended that archives rethink how they function, from acquisition, to processing, to storage, to reference and access. He gave a succinct history of the profession: in the 19th century, archives dealt with individual items according to historical manuscript traditions; in the 20th century, archives dealt with series and aggregates; in the 21st century, in the digital era, archives will need to come up with automated business rules for emails, blogs, websites, databases, and geographic information systems. This provocative speaker referred the WWW as the Wild Wild West because of the lack of standards, lawlessness, and the rugged individualism of proprietary formats. Our rule-driven professions of archivists and librarians make it difficult to adapt to this new environment. Pearce-Moses also gave a more technical presentation the second day on PeDALS (Persistent Digital Archives and Library System), a system developed at the Arizona State Library in partnership with Florida, New York, South Carolina, and Wisconsin, to develop an integrated workflow to curate large digital collections and to implement digital “stacks” using LOCKSS (Lots of Copies Keep Stuff Safe).

continued on page 74
NARA (National Archives and Records Administration) lawyer Jason Baron discussed concrete problems encountered by lawyers who have to deal with massive amounts of electronic records. He discussed the legal implications of going from the “information explosion” era to the “information inflation” era. He gave the example of the present administration which will generate one billion emails in eight years and how keyword retrieval does not work well in legal settings. He discussed myths (a keyword search will retrieve all documents about a topic), hype (the legal tech sector will easily obtain a very high rate of recall using one particular software), and reality (in one study, lawyers retrieved 20% of relevant documents even though they believed they had retrieved 75% of what they needed). He said that information retrieval is harder than people think because of the fundamental ambiguity of language, coupled with OCR (optical record recognition) problems, human errors, and misspellings. He added that the variety of ESI, electronically stored information, such as emails, wikis, blogs, voicemails, text messages, videos, etc. — compound the problem. He concluded that the legal profession needs a better search engine for large data sets of legal documents and records. His presentation was quite technical but one came out with the idea that no single method was effective, and that different search and retrieval methods had to be used to get relevant hits. The speaker recommended a look at the Sedona Conference guidelines for more details www.thesedonaconference.org.

L. Reynolds Cahoon, from Lockheed Martin, discussed the RIM Ecosystem (Record Information Management). He reflected on the present situation — businesses embraced new technology faster that record keeping systems, secretaries are long gone, all employees keep records on their C drive — and suggested a holistic approach to records management. The whole is what matters, not the parts. He presented several models explaining what Record Information Management is and concluded that records managers cannot do it alone. They need to get the support of others in the organization and should accept what is “good enough” rather than focus on “best practices.”

Jorge Roman and Shelly Spearin, both from Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL), gave a fascinating presentation because they showed us how to search large data sets and retrieve relevant information without being distracted by irrelevant information. LANL developed the eKM (electronic Knowledge Management), which gathers, reduces, annotates, organizes, synthesizes, and visualizes information. Roman applied eKM to 475 speeches delivered by President Bush regarding Iraq. He did it in real time and the audience was able to see the major concepts in these speeches, the emerging themes and the fading themes over time. It looked like magic to me. eKM can be applied to small sets of documents (20 or 30) to very large sets (100,000+). Similarly, Mark Conrad, from NARA, and Richard Marcciano, from UC San Diego, discussed data grids — which are middleware services that sit between applications and data sources. These grids allow users to access data stored in any type of storage, stored anywhere, without having to know the systems’ protocols. This open source approach to managing large sets of digital data — mostly in the sciences — are used by several universities across the country. This was a technical presentation and I was lost in the details.

Ken Thibodeau, from NARA, discussed the Electronic Records Archives Program (ERA) which is being developed at NARA, whose goal is to automate the life cycle of records, paper and electronic, of the US government. Thibodeau first conceded that there is a great unknown. Nobody knows, 100 years from today, what people will need and what technology they will use. With this in mind, NARA, in partnership with Lockheed Martin, is developing a complex system which plans to accomplish the following: to open to new kinds of e-records (such as GIS records, medical models, engineering models, virtual reality, etc.); to deal with an increasing number of e-records (and he gave example of the astronomical rise in the number of emails between the Reagan administration and today); to allow ERA to evolve in response to changing technologies; and to ensure that ERA preserve authentic records. Unlike the rest of the conference speakers, Rosemary Flynn, from the University of North Dakota, presented basic concepts of project management and how these could be applied to digital projects. This was refreshing and allowed for a breather. Cathy Hartman and Mark Phillips, both from the University of North Texas, spoke about digitization at their library and collaborative projects in their home state: the CyberCemetery project (the new way to preserve dead Websites), the Texas Register Archive, the Texas Laws and Resolutions Archive, and the Portal to Texas History, which comprises 70 partners — small libraries, museums, and communities. The challenges of the digital age seemed daunting. It was clear from all presentations that the only way to deal with information inflation was collaboration between universities, government agencies, and private companies. Everybody had the sense that librarians and archivists were being left behind, that too much effort was wasted on defining perfect standards, rather than being nimble and moving with the new technology. Communication between the traditional professions and IT specialists is impeded by serious language barriers, and in this new world, I feared that librarians and archivists are becoming marginalized. But, we still have something in common. We love acronyms.

All speakers have posted their PowerPoint presentations on the National Archives Website at: http://www.archives.gov/rocky-mountain/records-mgmt/conferences/digital-preservation.html.

Reports of Meetings from the 27th Annual Charleston Conference

Issues in Book and Serial Acquisition, “What Tangled Webs We Weave,” Francis Marion Hotel, Embassy Suites Historic District, and College of Charleston (Addleston Library and Arnold Hall, Jewish Studies Center), Charleston, SC, November 7-10, 2007

Charleston Conference Reports compiled by: Ramune K. Kubilius (Collection Development / Special Projects Librarian, Northwestern University, Galter Health Sciences Library) <r-kubilius@northwestern.edu>

Column Editor’s Note: Thank you to all of the conference attendees who volunteered to become reporters, providing highlights of so many conference sessions. Please visit the Charleston Conference Website for session handouts and discussions. The entire 2007 Charleston Conference Proceedings will be published by Libraries Unlimited / Greenwood Publishing Group, available in fall 2008. — RKK

Concurrent Sessions — Friday, November 9th, 2007

Implementing ERMs: Opportunities and Challenges — Presented by Rebecca Kemp (Serials Supervisor Librarian, University of North Carolina at Wilmington), Kristin Martin (Electronic Resources Cataloger, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)

Reported by: Rachel A. Erb (Dr. C.C. and Mabel L. Criss Library, University of Nebraska-Omaha) <erb@mail.unomaha.edu>

As someone new to Innovative’s ERM module, this presentation was a solid introduction to not only this module, but also to ERM project management. The dual perspectives (one from a large research library and one from a regional campus) also served to illuminate several approaches to the decision-making process while building an ERM. First, the presenters explained the division of labor at each respective institution; this underscores there is not one clear path to coordinating such a project. They also demonstrated how the ERM can provide electronic resource holdings information. Kemp demonstrated how resource and license records can be displayed in Innovative’s OPAC. I would recommend securing a copy of their slides — this continued on page 75
is especially the case for the uninitiated. (By the way, UNC-W’s ERM record templates are posted to IUG’s Clearinghouse!)  

Agents and Publishers in the Consoritual e-World (Part 1) — Presented by Friedemann Wiegel, Moderator (Harrasowitz), Robert W. Boissy (Manager, Agency Relations, Springer), Adam Chesler (Assistant Director, American Chemical Society), Tina Feick (Vice President of Customer Relations, EBSCO Information Services)  

Reported by: Heather S. Miller (SUNY Albany) <HMiller@uamail.albany.edu>  

This panel presented the viewpoints of publishers and subscription agents working with consortia and e-resources. Chesler pointed out that consortia are crucial for a small publisher by permitting the publisher to reach a larger audience. There are many issues related to title lists, payment (direct or via agent, consolidated or individual), licenses (who signs on whose behalf?), and when is it NOT?—Presented by Janet Fisher (Senior Publishing Consultant, Publishers Communication Group, Inc.), Todd Spires (Collection Development Office, Bradley University), Kate Duff (Licensing & Permissions Manager, University of Chicago Press)  

Reported by: Karen Fischer (University of Iowa Libraries) <karen-fischer@uiowa.edu>  

Walker looked at the practical examples of collective wisdom, such as Google’s page-rank algorithm for determining relevancy, Wikipedia, and even vetted academic tools, such as Birds of North America and the Encyclopedia of Life. Walker demonstrated striking screen shots of a Wikipedia article changing radically over time. She presented the theory behind the wisdom of crowds: if a majority of people are more likely to be correct than not, then the majority view is most likely correct. Sally then explained that certain conditions must be fulfilled for crowds to possess wisdom: they must have diverse, independent, and de-centralized sources of information. A necessary check on a crowd’s information is expert editorial review to maintain good quality information. Sally expressed optimism that wikis will indeed contain good information.  

Developing a Meaningful Practicum for Library Students in Technical Services — Presented by Elizabeth Lorbeer (Associate Director for Content Management, Health Sciences, University of Alabama at Birmingham)  

Responding to the inability to find qualified personnel for technical services jobs, the library worked with the library school to have a student each semester do a practicum (e.g., internship) in technical services for 120-150 hours in the second or third semester. They treat this very seriously, have the students interview. Provided them with information on the position, organization, and what the students are asked what they want to learn and what would make a meaningful experience for them. On board, the student is provided with a desk and ID badge, but no keys, money, or access to personnel records. The students keep blogs. Lorbeer meets with the student(s) weekly, asking and answering many questions. The students are shown much of the work of technical services and given serious work to do such as cataloging theses and contributing original records to OCLC. The students are included in staff meetings and there is a field trip to EBSCO. She stated that there should be no surprises at the final evaluation. If it does not work out, ask the student where it went wrong. She feels that hosting interns has made her a better supervisor.  

Librarians and Wikipedia — Presented by David Goodman (Administrator at Wikipedia; previously Bibliographer and Research Librarian, Princeton University:)  

Reported by: Amanda DiFeterici (SLIS Student, University of South Carolina)  

There are currently over two million articles in Wikipedia comprising over ten million pages, and two to three articles are being added every minute. Who determines what articles are accepted and who checks them for accuracy? The answer: the community, many of whom are librarians. Goodman took us behind the scenes to the inner workings of Wikipedia: how articles are accepted, edited, and how a community of volunteers manages quality control of the fastest growing reference source to emerge on the Internet. Rather than disrespecting the authority of Wikipedia articles, librarians can help shape the future of Wikipedia by contributing their expertise. More information on how librarians can help can be found on Goodman’s Wikipedia page by searching “User: DGG” in Wikipedia.  

Librarians, Aggregators, and Publishers: Can We All Live Together? — Presented by Janet Fisher (Senior Publishing Consultant, Publishers Communication Group, Inc.), Todd Spires (Collection Development Office, Bradley University), Kate Duff (Licensing & Permissions Manager, University of Chicago Press)  

Reported by: Karen Fischer (University of Iowa Libraries) <karen-fischer@uiowa.edu>  

Fisher reported preliminary results from a survey conducted to better understand the effect of aggregated databases on traditional journal subscriptions. Highlighted results: 52% of libraries do not keep usage statistics for continued on page 76
individual titles in an aggregated database; 51% would not consider canceling a print subscription, 28% would consider canceling, and 3% would cancel (the numbers were almost the same for canceling online). Some of Fisher’s conclusions were: aggregated databases are appreciated and valuable to many libraries, particularly smaller ones; databases may be the best way for a publisher to get into the smaller libraries; embargos make a difference on retention; and, faculty recommendations and usage remain important.

Spires presented the common advantages and disadvantages of aggregated databases for libraries. The largest benefit is the good value for many titles, especially for smaller libraries. Some frustrations are scattered issues, embargo periods being inconsistent from title to title, missing issues, quirky usage data, and content changes without notice.

Lastly Duff presented a publisher’s view of aggregated databases by discussing what factors must be considered when deciding if they would participate in an aggregated database. In examining reach, readership and revenue, Duff concluded that there are limits on the amount of distribution of content that University of Chicago Press would allow, but that an aggregator can be an important component of a publisher’s business strategy.

Building a Regional Print Archive: Implications and Future Directions for ARL Libraries — Presented by Judy Ruttenberg (Project Librarian, Triangle Research Libraries Network), Hilary M. Davis (Collection Manager for Physical Sciences, Engineering and Data Analysis, North Carolina State University Libraries)

Reported by: Mildred L. Jackson, Ph.D. (The University of Alabama Libraries, Tuscaloosa, AL) <mjackson@ua.edu>

Ruttenberg and Davis reported on an archiving project to maintain a single copy of print serials being undertaken by the TRLN Libraries in North Carolina. Currently Duke and University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill are the main participants. The model is a cooperative endeavor to gain space in the libraries and to hold archival print copies of those journals the libraries have access to electronically. The task force overseeing the project began with Chemistry and other science journals in their pilot. Titles were reviewed and participating libraries could contribute volumes that were missing to complete journal runs for archiving. This program allows TRLN libraries to discard volumes for the archived titles that are held in an off site facility owned by Duke. UNC-CH currently leases space in this off site facility for its holdings. Several important aspects were part of the planning of this project. First, there is an expedited document delivery process in place between the TRLN Libraries. Second, the libraries are members of LOCKSS and Portico. Finally, the ARL statistics were analyzed to assure members that their rank would not be negatively affected by being part of this project.

Chinese e-Content Providers in China (former session title: E-books in China) — Presented by Angela Ko (Chinese Bibliographer/Assistant Acquisition Librarian, University of Hong Kong Libraries)

Reported by: Angela Kleinschmidt (SLIS Student, University of South Carolina)

Ko began by speaking about the state of higher education in China. The Chinese government is spending a lot of money to create a world-class education system. They are building large, high-tech new campuses and libraries. Ko pointed out that Chinese government guidelines suggest that for each student enrolled at Chinese universities, the library should contain 100 books. The two top universities are Peking University and Tsinghua University. Peking University specializes more in the humanities and social science, and Tsinghua is known for engineering and other technical fields. Both of these schools were instrumental in developing e-resources for Chinese higher education. A professor at Tsinghua University developed China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), a provider of e-journals. Currently they offer 7000 journal titles. APABI (Authors Publishers Artery Buyer Internet), a supplier of eBooks, is closely linked with Peking University. Both of these services are used by over 1000 schools in China, and in lesser numbers internationally. The speaker stated that publishers are very willing to sell their books electronically, and that they are not very concerned about copyright violations because the eBooks can only be printed or copied one page at a time. Since books are quite inexpensive in China (about $2-$5 each) it is generally not worthwhile for someone to print and sell the eBooks.

As if by Magic...Technical Services Made Easy — Presented by Jennifer Clarke (Team Leader, Technical Services, Bucknell University), Ruth Fischer (Partner, R2 Consulting), James D. Shetler (Vice President, Library Technical Services, YBP)

Reported by: Clara B. Potter (Camden-Carroll Library, Morehead State University) <clpotter@morehead-st.edu>

Shetler spoke of shelf-ready services as being something most vendors offer. He recommended making sure an approval plan return rate was down to about 1-2% before beginning shelf-ready services. One major obstacle to beginning such a service is convincing tech services staff and selectors that it will work. It is also important to determine what outcome libraries want by making this change and how it will affect workflow. He urges libraries to find out what their vendors can do. He recommends asking for sample files and testing them, determining shelf-ready requirements, and working out the kinks. Local practices work, but some practices become dated and may be stopped. He also emphasizes working with the vendor to get what you want.

Fisher’s company does workflow analysis in libraries, and has three workflow principles: simplify and standardize requirements, create a mainstream, then automate the mainstream. She talked about the three B’s of change: BE sure of the benefits, BE an informed consumer, and look Beyond acquisitions. She pointed to actual cost savings, speed to shelf, and elimination of backlogs as obvious benefits. Additionally, de-emphasizing print workflow allows staff time to be directed to other high-value tasks, such as managing electronic resources. Part of being an informed consumer has to do with being willing to accept third party records, or good-enough records, and the occasional duplicate call number.

Re-Inventing the Journal Under Open Access — Presented by Anthony Watkinson, Moderator (Senior Lecturer, Centre for Publishing, University College London), Paul Peters (Head of Business Development, Hindawi Publishing Corporation), Kevin Stranack (Public Knowledge Project Librarian, Simon Fraser University), Martin Moyle (Project Manager RIOJA, University College London Library Services)

Reported by: Rebecca Kemp (W.M. Randall Library, University of North Carolina Wilmington) <kempr@uncw.edu>

Peters described Hindawi’s value added to journal manuscripts by the publisher’s traditional functions, including copy-editing and formatting, which can add up to 50 hours of work per manuscript. Peters encouraged supporting publishers for maintaining this added value. Stranack has helped continued on page 77

Against the Grain / September 2008 <http://www.against-the-grain.com>
develop Public Knowledge Project's Open Journal Systems, open source software that facilitates peer review and journal hosting for small publishers. This software is part of a larger effort by the Public Knowledge Project to make good quality research more accessible. Last, Moyle discussed the Repository Interface for Overlaid Journal Archives (RIOJA) project. Moyle is currently researching the question of whether scientists in the field of astrophysics would be interested in buying into an overlay journal, that is, an online journal composed of articles that have previously been deposited into different subject or institutional repositories. Another goal of the RIOJA project is to create an example overlay journal to engage a further response from the academic community. All three speakers illustrated that diverse scholarly publishing models currently coexist.

WorldCat Selection: Multiple Vendors, One View — Presented by David Whitehair, Moderator (WorldCat Selection Product Manager, OCLC), Katharine Treptow Farrell (Head, Order Division and Assistant University Librarian for Technical Services, Princeton University Library), Anali Maughan Perry (Assistant Librarian, Collections & Scholarly Communication, Arizona State University Libraries), Pat Adams (Director of Sales, Blackwell Book Services)

Reported by: Katherine Latal (University at Albany) <klatal@uamail.albany.edu>

Four presenters outlined the set up and implementation process for this new selection service. Whitehair explained that WorldCat Selection is based on Cornell University Library's ITSO CUL software that was developed when the Library of Congress discontinued its alert service. It is a front end to a vendor system and does not replace it. A library sets up their profile with a vendor. A vendor passes the information to OCLC to set up a library’s view and selectors receive files of titles. Selectors mark titles for purchase. Acquisitions staff export the titles into the local ILS. Treptow Farrell worked with OCLC on development and testing, including mapping data and profile set up. Adams noted that a library’s profile can be created in one week and be ready for testing the next week. Although a library may filter supplied records, the vendor prefers to make adjustments to the profile as requested. All data elements in the vendor supplied announcements (e.g., table of contents) are not available at this time, but additional features are being added. The ability to link back to a vendor’s database for these elements is an anticipated enhancement. OCLC also plans to incorporate de-duping, a consortial view, and the capability to select titles not yet in the vendor databases. While streamlining acquisitions workflow, Perry, recognized the potential to save time spent learning and searching different vendor databases. Subscription to this service may replace paper slips, but it does not eliminate the need to search multiple databases for a known title. This service should free up time to execute those searches. This workflow collapses the length of time between selection, ordering, and receipt of materials; a win/win for everyone involved.

Buff Siren Thumbnails: How Far Can Google Go? — Presented by Bruce Strauch, JD (Professor, School of Business, The Citadel)

Reported by: Elizabeth R. Lorbeer (University of Alabama at Birmingham) <lorbeer@uab.edu>

Known for telling a good law story while sketching transformation law on an easel, is Bruce Strauch's tale of United States copyright law and fair-use tests. Picture Bruce drawing a sexy pair of woman’s legs as he masterfully tells the legal tale of Jeff Koons' copyright infringement of a Gucci ad. Koons, a well-known American imagery artist, has been sued several times for taking advertisements and incorporating the images into his kitschy art. Had Koons transformed the legs image in his piece or was he committing infringement? What about Google and its mega search crawlers that prowl BLOGS and Websites to later organize found images into their... continued on page 78
index. This benign activity collected a surmountable number of scantily clad ladies found on personal fan sites. Google converted the images to tiny thumbnails but provided a link to the larger picture. Perfect 10, a men’s magazine and copyright owner of many of the modern day digital pin ups, sued Google to stop distribution. Was Google performing a transformation service by using the smallest image possible to the human eye? At the end, the courts rule in Google and Jeff Koons’ favor since both had sufficiently transformed the original work to qualify as fair use.

Beasty Breakfasts — Saturday, November 10th, 2007

Back to the Future? How Content Connects Us to Each Other and to Knowledge in Old and New Ways — Presented by JoAnne Sparks (Director, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Institute Library)

Reported by: Ramune K. Kubilius (Northwestern University, Galter Health Sciences Library) <r.kubilius@northwestern.edu>

Sparks shared her thoughts on the theme of structured serendipity (the art of looking for something you were not seeking). This relates to innovation and discovery and usually generates excitement. Usability, user assessment and market research in a Venn diagram all connect. The first law: content rules; second law: access vs. gatekeeping (even for Special Collections); third law: connections (people to information), or as J.R. Wilson of UNC would say: “Connect people to people and people to information”.

Seemingly with pride, Sparks mentioned her library’s Today’s Science Spaks, the Scopus news feed to their home page. Synapse: Your Connection to MSK Publications (public release in Jan. 2008), seeks to not just store, but connect; incorporate and integrate. In the third phase, it will include Web services, capabilities, social networking. In a specialized cancer center, her library’s information space isn’t large, but incorporates: business newspapers, coffee pot, art work, books, wired and wireless. The MSK CyberLibrary Café presents scientific images on plasma screens. “Re-expose the content”. Innovation at home apparently intrigued audience members, since the first question was: what software does the presenter’s household use for cataloging the personal library she mentioned during her talk? (answer—several different ones).

Enabling Innovation in Your Library: Identifying and Building the New within your Current Environment — Presented by Robert McDonald (Director, Strategic Data Alliances, San Diego Supercomputer Center, UC San Diego), Elisabeth Leonard (President, Library Solutions)

Reported by: Ramune K. Kubilius (Northwestern University, Galter Health Sciences Library) <r.kubilius@northwestern.edu>

Innovation involves people implementing new ideas that create value. It is not invention or diffusion and is necessary in order for libraries to adjust to new workflows. Audience members almost needed a map (or compass) as McDonald and Leonard directed a whirlwind innovation tour with library examples: traditional, pockets (of innovation), organization-wide outsourcing. Libraries and IT. Endowed chairs for technology and innovation. Libraries could learn from the corporate sector, companies like Proctor & Gamble, “seekers”, that use services like InnoCentive, where registered potential “solvers” only get paid if their submitted solutions are chosen. The audience was involved in two descriptive case studies (the speakers would have to analyze whether the audience’s examples met the two case’s parameters). In order to foster innovation in an organization there should be: involved leaders; incentives and time provided; skills development; externally focused innovators; willingness to fail — without consequences; brand redevelopment. The audience was reminded of Google’s 70/20/10 rule, denoting allocation of engineers in correspondence with the core business and peripheral areas. The speakers paraphrased some technology innovators—“Crazy guys have stature” and “The library is an 18th century brand that is not updated in people’s minds.” Innovation in libraries is not just about workflows.

Innovation Sessions — Saturday, November 10th, 2007

“The library is a good source, if you have several months.” Why Library Sources Are Not the First Choice — Presented by Lynn Silipigni Connaway (Research Scientist, OCLC )

Reported by: Michael N. Kaltwang (SLIS Student, University of South Carolina)

It is human nature, to take the path of least resistance. In the not too distant past, resources were scarce and attention was abundant. Now, resources are abundant and attention is scarce. In this well attended presentation, Silipigni Connaway discussed the research findings explaining why the library is not typically the first choice in locating information.

Research revealed that students want information, not instruction on how to find it. They take the path of least resistance, avoiding the need to leave home, or to authenticate on a library sponsored database. They use Google and other search engines which make searching for information quick and anonymous (despite the risk of using non-scholarly search results). Research also revealed that many faculty also use search engines before making a trip to a library. The convenience of quick information seems to take precedence over quality.

When asked what improvements they want in a library, students and faculty asked for things like more roaming staff (to answer questions), a coffee house atmosphere, universal library cards that would work in all libraries, space to interact and collaborate, a reduced intimidation factor, better signage and other pathfinders, and to have a bookstore environment. Recurring themes like convenience, currency, speed, and familiarity seemed to be what patrons want. If we are to entice the customer to seek information from the library first, perhaps we need to listen to the research findings.

(More information can be found at: http://www.oclc.org/research/pre sentations/default.htm)

Beyond Excel and Access for Dummies: Creative Use of Web-Authoring Tools to Make Library Data Accessible for a Broader Audience — Presented by Susanne Clement (Head of Collection Development, University of Kansas)

Reported by: Alana Lewis (SLIS Student, University of South Carolina)

The traditional ways of presenting data with programs such as Excel or Access are not exactly user-friendly. Clement showed how ColdFusion, a Web development tool, could make pages more dynamic for those users who don’t have advanced knowledge of traditional spreadsheet and database programs. ColdFusion works with Adobe and Macromedia programs, and creates Web forms that send email or interact with an ILS. At the University of Kansas, it is used for both external projects such as allowing faculty to look at serial cancellation data, and internal projects such as filling out lost book reports. The library has trained a staff person to deal with data and Web programming. Clement made a strong case for creating a position for a specialized technician to take the pressure off librarians having to learn Web and data skills in a haphazard manner.

Delivering Targeted Library Resources into a Blackboard Framework — Presented by Richard Cox (Digital Technology Consultant, UNC Greensboro)

Reported by: Clara B. Potter (Camden-Carroll Library, Morehead State University) <c.potter@morehead-st.edu>

Cox provided a light Saturday-morning crowd with a way of integrating course-specific library content into courseware. The rationale behind using BlackBoard is that the students are there anyway, and providing resources specific to the course is a much better delivery method than more general links to library resources, which might require leaving the courseware space or additional logins to access the resources. He also considers this a more...
appropriate place to venture into the “user space” than social spaces such as mySpace or FaceBook.

Course-specific resources are selected by liaisons using a Web services interface which creates a custom page for BlackBoard. The resources pages are vetted by faculty before being added to the course information. There were some questions about the amount of work to generate a resource list for each course, and whether it is more reasonable to begin with more general resources and working toward the course-specific.

Unfortunately for many of us, the programming skills to develop such an interface are beyond us, even though Cox used some “lite” programming languages such as JSON. Instructional technology staff who work with BlackBoard might be good partners, as they often help faculty with building courses.

The concept of providing resources within the courseware, at the course level, is part of the academic libraries’ new model of integration with the user space and extension of library instruction. This is one of the better examples I’ve seen.

The Future of Academic Libraries Without Print — Presented by Allen McKiel, Moderator (Director of Libraries, Northeastern State University), Anne Cerstvik Nolan (Electronic Resources Librarian, Brown University Library), Jim Dooley (Head Collection Services, University of California Merced), Robert Murdoch (Asst. University Librarian for Collection Development & Technical Services, Brigham Young University), Carol Zsulya (Head College Management, Cleveland State University Library), Brooks Haderlie (Electronic Services Librarian, Brigham Young University-Idaho)

Reported by: Sharon Dyas-Correia (University of Toronto) <s.dyas.correia@utoronto.ca>

A panel of five librarians, moderated by McKiel, presented possible views of academic libraries without print. The scenario assumed universal remote access and McKiel asked, “What will libraries do?” He suggested that librarians will play important roles in acquisitions, organization, circulation, reference, instruction, preservation and publication. Panelists provided opening position statements and considered: 1) What will be the dominant acquisition mode for online resources? 2) How will the cost of information change? 3) Will publishers be needed for scholarly communication and will the library have a publishing role? 4) As the skill sets required for librarianship evolve, will the nature of the role change?

Dooley stressed the importance of digital preservation and indicated that for his library, preservation of institutional scholarly output will be crucial. Murdoch stated that the traditional idea of the monograph and serial will blur. There will be more customization, more piecemeal purchasing, more multimedia formats and libraries will be more involved in publication and preservation issues. Haderlie indicated that information literacy education and library marketing will be important. He argued information will always cost, multimedia items will become more important and book chapters will be marketable units. Zsulya suggested that remote access and outreach, as well as preservation of locally produced materials, will continue to be important. Cerstvik Nolan stated that a world without print is already her world. In the future excellent instruction, marketing, and electronic textbooks will be important. Panelists agreed that librarians will become less accountants for physical objects and more systems analysts, brokers and educators. They will become more conduits for information. The session was well organized, extremely interesting and thought provoking.

If We Build It, Will They Come?: Modeling a Donor Management System — Presented by Julia Bock (Acquisitions Librarian/Assistant Professor, Long Island University), Patricia Keogh (Head of the Cataloging Department/Assistant Professor, Long Island University)

Reported by: Ramune K. Kubilius (Northwestern University, Galter Health Sciences Library) <kubilius@northwestern.edu>

Bock and Keogh spoke to a small but interested group about a system they’ve devised to record donations (books, money, other “treasures”). Using the system, the library can produce outputs: acknowledgement letters, reports where patterns may emerge on seasonal patterns of giving, affiliations of donors. The system supplies information to the cataloger (the OPAC view shows the gift record and “donor” as an author is added). Gifts are recognized in displays, through events, in announcements, and there is an electronic book plate. The audience had questions about the content of acknowledgement letters (notes on books’ conditions?). The library does not “poach” the development office’s territory, does no direct soliciting, but is permitted to handle money donations. Postings are sometimes placed in the university’s alum magazine to fill gaps. Periodical donations are not accepted and first editions of books are highly sought. (The Charleston Conference site moodle contains: “Survey on Donation Activities.” “Handout on Supporting Donation Activities” that includes examples of donation policies, creating a contract, unwanted material, and fundraising issues; and the presentation PowerPoint.)


Reported by: Michael N. Kaltwang (SLIS Student, University of South Carolina)

In this well attended and interactive session, the presenter discussed the swarm theory and how it can apply to libraries and other stakeholders in the future of publishing, distribution, and access models. The presenter takes an administrative eye on the self-organizing unit. The basic idea behind the presentation is that when large numbers of stakeholders take action and coordinate efforts, they speak with stronger voices and balance each other to reach an effective and ultimately positive end.

Examples provided for swarms on the social Web include Delicious, and Library Thing. Other current coordinated efforts include ibiblio, tallys, PlOas, and the creative commons. The users are determining the direction of the social Web and in this sense, the organization of the social Web is based on the value of trust and participation. Hundreds of organized minor impacts can create major shifts. The key to success is participation.

Developing Effective Scholarly Communication Advocates: The Experiences of Three University Librarians in Developing Scholarly Communication Programs — Presented by Sara Fuchs (Digital Technologies Librarian, Georgia State University), Julie Speer (Head, Scholarly Comm. & Digital Services, Georgia Institute of Technology), Christine Fischer (Head of Acquisitions, UNC Greensboro), Stephen Dew (Collections & Scholarly Resources Coordinator, UNC Greensboro)

Reported by: Rebecca Kemp (W.M. Randall Library, University of North Carolina Wilmington) <kempr@uncw.edu>

Fischer and Dew opened by describing how the administration supports the scholarly communication program at UNC Greensboro. The Dean of Libraries and UNCG Faculty Senate have enabled UNCG to hold scholarly communication workshops, host a pilot institutional repository (IR) that will be shared with other UNCG System schools, and recruit the help of liaison librarians in publicizing these efforts. Fuchs of Georgia State University also held workshops for liaison librarians and has begun an IR pilot project. She indicated that faculty were more receptive to words in advertisements such as “increased impact,” “permanent access” and “digital archive” rather than some of the words librarians typically use in promoting IRs. Speer finished the session by describing the services at Georgia Institute of Technology. Georgia Tech is administering an IR, in addition to offering digital publishing and conference organization services for faculty members. Speer advised that clear communication between librarians and faculty is critical to the success of such endeavors. The speakers mentioned that participating in the ACR/L/ARL Institute on Scholarly Communication helped give direction to their initiatives, and they anticipate expanding their institutions’ services in the future.

continued on page 80
An Audience Response System (ARS) measures the real-time reactions of studio audiences of the 2004 United States Presidential Debates, which offer their own answers to questions. “by network television news programs during the 2004 United States Presidential Debates, which measure[d] the real-time reactions of studio-audience members as they listened to the candidates’ arguments.” (Hoffman and Goodwin, 423)

The clickers work much the same way in a classroom setting. Clickers enable “instructors” to instantaneously collect student responses to a posted question, generally multiple choice. The answers are immediately tallied and displayed on a classroom projection screen where both students and instructor can see and discuss them. (Caldwell, 9) It has been found that clickers encourage participation by ensuring anonymity, and the instructor can tailor a lesson to make sure that a particular concept is comprehended, if it is clear that, on the basis of the responses, the students have failed to grasp the concept being discussed. (Hoffman and Goodwin, 425)

Clickers in Libraries
Applications of clickers within a library setting are only just beginning to be explored, primarily in the area of library instruction. Dickinson College, Furman University, Texas A&M University, and Brigham Young University have all recently introduced clickers in their library instruction sessions with some degree of success. Hamaker mentioned purchases made now on faith, but that later have a cloud of uncertainty. Suggestions: Ensure Q&A time in sessions. Restrict the number of panelists. Social interactions: emphasize true Lively Lunches; incorporate ACRL-like topical diners; Start Wednesday and discontinue Saturday programming. Have theme tracts, e.g., eBooks. Topical of Interest for 2008: More discussion on text and data mining; how to predict what’s popular; feasibility inquiry; authors’ rights & DRM & copyright — maybe a publishers’ panel; how libraries can avoid extinction; the China phenomenon (mentioned in several 2007 sessions); sessions for small college libraries (or public libraries or special libraries). General comments: “This conference has a wonderful soul about it and there was a welcoming feeling from old-timers” (first-timer). The conference was a bit intimidating, but the environment and topics were good (library school student). I feel like a “rare bird”, but the issues are the same (a special librarian). The award for furthest point of origin (thereby the most expensive plane tickets)? Hong Kong. Nice problem to have? So many sessions, too much from which to choose. 

This concludes the reports we received from the 2007 Charleston Conference. For information about the 2008 Charleston Conference visit the Charleston Conference Website at www.katina.info/conference.

Technology Left Behind — Clicking Towards Information Literacy

Column Editor: Cris Ferguson (Electronic Resources/Serials Librarian, James B. Duke Library, Furman University, 3300 Poinsett Highway, Greenville, SC 29613; Phone: 864-294-2713) <cris.ferguson@furman.edu>

One of the challenges of information fluency instruction is how to engage students in the instruction session and to cultivate their interest in the materials being covered. This is particularly difficult in an academic library setting, where librarians may encounter a student only once a semester, if that often. One potential solution with which a number of academic libraries are experimenting is audience response systems.

What Is An Audience Response System?

An Audience Response System (ARS) allows individual members of a class to respond to multiple-choice questions projected on a screen through the use of handheld remote control devices. (Bombaro, 298) While it goes by many names, Audience Response System, Personal Response System (PRS), Classroom Response System, and Electronic Voting System to name a few, this relatively new technology is more commonly known as clickers. Caldwell likens the use of clickers to “the ‘Ask the Audience’ portion of the game show ‘Who Wants to be a Millionaire’.” (9) By selecting a number/letter on their clickers, all audience members are able to participate in the game show, offering their own answers to questions. Outside of academia, an ARS system was used “by network television news programs during the 2004 United States Presidential Debates, which measured the real-time reactions of studio-audience members as they listened to the candidates’ arguments.” (Hoffman and Goodwin, 423)

The clickers work much the same way in a classroom setting. Clickers enable “instructors” to instantaneously collect student responses to a posted question, generally multiple choice. The answers are immediately tallied and displayed on a classroom projection screen where both students and instructor can see and discuss them. (Caldwell, 9) It has been found that clickers encourage participation by ensuring anonymity, and the instructor can tailor a lesson to make sure that a particular concept is comprehended, if it is clear that, on the basis of the responses, the students have failed to grasp the concept being discussed. (Hoffman and Goodwin, 425)

How Do Clickers Work?

A clicker system is comprised of three basic components:
1. the receiver, which attaches to the instructor’s computer
2. the clickers, and
3. the accompanying software program which is loaded on the instructor’s computer. (Hoffman and Goodwin, 425)

The clickers themselves are essentially wireless keypads, similar in appearance to television remote controls. (Hoffman and Goodwin, 425) The clicker software typically integrates with Microsoft PowerPoint, and, in some cases, other Microsoft programs, such as Excel. Data is transmitted from the clickers to the software by way of the receiver. Instructors pose a question on a slide as part of PowerPoint presentation, offering multiple-choice or true / false answers. Students select their answer, using the keypad on the clickers. The receiver on the instructor’s computer collects the student responses, tabulates their answers, and makes the results immediately available as a graph or chart.

Clickers in Libraries
Applications of clickers within a library setting are only just beginning to be explored, primarily in the area of library instruction. Dickinson College, Furman University, Texas A&M University, and Brigham Young University have all recently introduced clickers in their library instruction sessions with some degree of success.