Don't Forget the Little Publishers

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Don't Forget the Little Publishers

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Abstract:

The objective of the session, “Don't Forget The Little Publishers” was to illustrate to the library community and to publishers alike the opportunities to discover and subscribe to high-quality content from small to medium-sized information providers, which to date are overlooked because these information providers lack the resources to effectively market their content. Attendees came away from the session with a much broader understanding of the challenges small publishers must overcome to sell their content; what types of content they are missing; examples of a number of vehicles that are being used to get content out in the market; novel subscription/pricing alternatives; and success stories from those who manage subscriptions. Conversely, attendees also were presented with trends and challenges the library community is facing that may limit future successes, in particular collection sales. The panel concluded by not concluding a clear direction but left it open for the future, as methodologies and internal/external factors of the participants change.

This interactive panel discussion, moderated by David Myers, was widely attended by a range of publishers and librarians, all looking to determine for themselves whether they've overlooked a small, but important segment of the market in their sales or acquisitions strategies.

After presenting the overview of the session, which was to illustrate a few of the opportunities to discover and subscribe to high-quality content from small- to medium-sized information providers—those that range from a one-publication publisher to those who publish less than a few dozen—which to date are overlooked because these information providers lack the resources to effectively market their content, the objectives were presented. Specifically, they were to come away, from multiple perspectives, with a much broader understanding of the following: What types of content are they missing; what vehicles are being used to get content out in the market, such as novel subscription/pricing alternatives; and success stories from those who did subscribe.

Following the overview and objectives, the current state of the industry was presented in order to establish a base line. A few statistics about the size of the professional and scholarly publishing industry illustrated that:

- The general size of the industry is approximately \$8b, of which science and technology is about \$4 billion and medical is \$2 billion.
- Growth is about 3% per year.
- A small number of large commercial publishers and a few “must have society publishers” dominate the market, which combined have more than 50% of the market.
- There are really three main providers of content: commercial publishers, societies and university presses, and the aggregators and intermediaries of those other two.
- Publishers employ over 200,000 people globally and produce over three million articles per year, and is growing in many disciplines by over 3% per year
- It is commonly known that there are about 25,000 scholarly titles worldwide from over 2000 publishers, but only about 60% are indexed by some database.
- Open access journals account for about 3% of the available titles.
- Historically, academia relied on a small range of well-respected content. Now, academia is less concerned with the title of a journal, but with their ability to have a comprehensive search experience.

- 2010-2012 is currently a dire and unpredictable environment for libraries and their budgets, with very little likelihood of growth anytime soon.

Following the presentation of the current state of the industry, David Myers of DMedia Associates discussed their challenges in extending the reach of many of their smaller clients, since their own budgets, their knowledge of the library market, and lack of manpower limit their reach. He provided a few examples of ways they try to incent the library market to uptake their content. Specifically by: using trials as an entrée to potential customers, driving usage with grass roots direct marketing, creating and expanding their Virtual Publisher Collection (their attempt to provide a multi-publisher, multi-title collection to international institutions at a discount based on world bank criteria), for individual publishers, creating institution-driven custom collections, at discounted prices, and for aggregated collections, creating relevant, metric-based pricing to allow access to a greater range of end-users, while still capturing appropriate levels of revenue.

Panelists Discussions

Tom Taylor – Dragonfly

Tom Taylor began his discussion from a historical perspective on consortia and why his organization targets them with their ISPG collection—a collection of high quality scholarly journals all from selected Highwire publishers. He posited that access by consortia leads to a greater amount of usage of titles, and thereby driving more research by users, ultimately providing more value for buyers and sellers of content. Tom reiterated some of the challenges for small publishers, including; arriving at a consensus, confidentiality, back office issues and limitations given limited resources, the need for transparency, geographical challenges, and, of course, budgetary issues.

Tom presented four main keys to success for small publishers and consortia:

1. There needs to be a critical mass of content for a consortium to become interested in

subscribing. Thus, packaging of multiple titles is crucial.

2. There needs to be an appropriate pricing model for consortium so that they receive value for their subscription.
3. Publishers must partner with an appropriate sales organization(s) that can reach and close subscriptions with those consortium.
4. Publishers must manage their sales channels effectively so as not to create confusion or unneeded competition.

Additionally, the following pricing models were presented, but noted that there are appropriate models for certain territories:

- Maintained holdings plus discounts for subscriptions.
- Maintained holdings plus top up for access to additional content.
- Flip deals (no required subscriptions).
- Tiered pricing model based on research intensity and/or FTE.

Stuart Silcox – Swets

Stuart Silcox, who represents Swets, illustrated the challenges and opportunities for small publishers by using the ALPSP Collection (which Swets represents globally) as example. In his presentation, he began by describing the Collection's benefits (1014 titles from 50 publishers) as a single contact point for libraries, with access from one portal and a single administration agent for their combined license, access and payments.

These benefits, in turn, solved the following problems for the small publisher:

- The ability to purchase high quality journals from small publishers is complex and costly.
- It reduces purchasing and management costs.
- It provides a uniform access platform.
- It provides "Big Deal" purchasing discounts.
- It provides an archive.
- It standardizes the services.
- It provides flexibility for buying decisions.

- It gets the attention/time from libraries.
- It adds a skillset small publishers often lack.
- It provides for much greater market penetration.
- It allows for instant relationships.

Jim Dooley – University of California Merced

Jim Dooley, the lone librarian on the panel, started by discussing the benefits of purchasing a collection of titles versus a small amount by publisher. He mentioned that the benefits of simplified licensing, ease of administration, and discounted pricing drive institutions to purchase collections. However, he then took a contrarian's approach to the other panelists, and livened up the discussion by first mentioning that after the UC consortia concluded subscribing to the Elsevier collection(s), there were barely any monies left over, especially for the small publishers' content. He mentioned that there is ever increasing and continued pressure on library collection budgets because of internal and external factors. With such a greater percentage of a shrinking budget going to consortial agreements, something will have to give.

In his opinion, he is seeing three trends: a growing resistance to packages (like those presented by other panelists), a demand to cut existing base package costs, and a break up of packages, acquiring titles individually as needed.

The Panel Session concluded without stating a conclusion, but suggested there is not a clear answer, only clear methodologies and challenges that must be overcome.