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The Savage Marketplace: The 1994 Charleston Conference

The 1994 Charleston Conference (November 3-5, 1994) went off without too many hitches. The weather was beautiful (we really lucked out) and the speakers were fabulous (as always). Anyway, since we are usually pretty remiss about reporting on the Charleston Conferences after the fact, here is our report on the 94 conference courtesy of the never-say-stop-working Janet Flowers. — KS

The Savage Marketplace: The 1994 Charleston Conference

Report by **Janet L. Flowers**
(Head of Acquisitions,
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Introduction

The dictionary's definition of the word "savage" includes the term "wild." A reference to wild uses the word "turbulent." Perhaps this is the closest meaning to the theme of this conference because the meeting itself seemed a very civilized affair.

Jerry Campbell, of **Duke University**, used the words of a country song, "We've got to get together to keep from falling apart," as his signal that all of the parties in the communication process must meet at the table to discuss their common goals despite colliding interests. He noted the addition of new players such as the telcos and cable cos and the federal government to a familiar litany heard at previous conferences. He advised attention and caution as the government approaches the design of the national information infrastructure.

Economic Conditions of Vendors

A panel, chaired by **Dana Alessi** of **Baker and Taylor**, gave three perspectives on the current economic woes of some vendors. **Barry Fast** of **Academic Book Center** detailed changes in the monographic and serials markets over the past twenty years. He noted a new sense of discipline in both marketplaces

because of the tightening dollars over the past several years.

Dana talked about the sale of **Baker and Taylor** by **W. R. Grace** to the **Carlyle Investment Company**. Her remarks indicated the complexity of dealing with an organization of 2,500 employees spread out over seven locations. It was important to provide information of this proportion to them quickly and accurately, so they could share it with the customers. She noted that the sale had resulted in positive changes for their company and a renewed emphasis upon development. She then reported on a recent aborted sale to **Follett**. She compared the process to that of a homeowner trying to sell his or her home. All must be in readiness while the potential buyers come in to look at the house.

Bruce Hedrick of **Faxon** talked about the need for honesty when there are rumors about the status of a company. He indicated that there had been intense scrutiny of what they had been doing right and what they had not been doing so well. He also advised individuals to be careful about what they write on the Internet because misinformation can be spread so quickly to so many individuals that way.

Connie Kelley of the **University of Virginia** expressed the librarians' perspective when companies upon which they depend are having financial difficulties or are undergoing major organizational changes. She noted that, in states where bids are required, uncertainty about a vendor's viability is a particular problem. She advised patience, a cool head, and not repeating rumors during the shakedowns.

New Products and Resources

Part of the conference was devoted to the unveiling of new products in the marketplace. **OCLC** touted three of these. **PromptCat** is coming out in the spring of 1995. It is a method whereby a vendor can transmit information to **OCLC** about the titles being shipped to a library, then **OCLC** can add the Library's holdings to that record in their database. This eliminates some of the manual steps in the

cataloging process. **PromptSelect** is currently a vision of a selection and ordering system. The selection system will consist of various bibliographic databases that can be accessed to identify titles for purchase. The **TechPro** service is an option whereby libraries can take advantage of cataloging services provided by **OCLC**.

Several speakers also noted new resources on the Internet that might be of interest to acquisitions and collection development librarians. At this point, however, most seemed to feel that the resources were more a novelty than an actual tool that could be incorporated into the daily worklives of their departments. Others explained some of the ways to access the Internet, such as through the World Wide Web. Concern was expressed because so much of what is being developed on the Internet is by individuals without any institutional commitment to maintain and sustain long-term access to the resources.

Management in the Savage Marketplace

John Secor, of **Yankee Book Peddler**, began the first of a three-part series on the general topic of leadership and management. His conclusion, after much reading of the literature, is that many of the new management ideas are just fads and we need to get back to old-fashioned management concepts. These include the need for continuous learning and relearning with persistent questioning of what we are doing and why.

Paul Clipp, a trained negotiator, gave advice on how to negotiate, a skill that he considers particularly critical for those in the professions represented in this audience. He urged the group to look for win-win solutions to issues. He also strongly encouraged everyone to explore the work of **Stephen Covey**, including his seven highly effective habits. By using patience, persistence, and good technique, those in the scholarly communications community should be able to negotiate changes of mutual benefit.

Another panel dealt with the current "fad" of outsourcing and the potential demise of Technical Services. **Keith Schmiedl**, of **Coutts Library Services**, noted that his company had examined the boundaries of its relationship with libraries and concluded that libraries need more than just books. For that reason, they have moved into more cataloging/processing activities. He noted that there needs to be open and honest sharing of information between a vendor providing these services and the Library using them. He also cautioned that the people issues related to this change are of paramount importance and should be dealt with sensitively.

Ernie Ingles, Director of the Library at the **University of Alberta**, talked about how a significant cut in the operating budget of his library led them to outsourcing with Coutts. They used four principles in the process: 1) commitment to job security, 2) a targeted strategy rather than across the board, 3) external client paramount over internal client, and 4) value improvements in processes. He reported that his library uses a combination of four models that they identified: vendor-generated cataloging, use of a bibliographic utility, combination of those two, and a cottage craft within their own library. He described a well-thought out and rational approach to a major change for this Library.

The Perspectives of Users

At the conference, there is always an attempt to bring scholars in to keep the others in the information chain aware of how information is being used. The two this year, **Caroline Hunt** (College of Charleston) and **Rob Kling** (UC-Irvine), were both interesting and entertaining. It was also clear that they are very aware of changes in the library world and are raising their expectations of the library's role.

The Client/Server Environment in the Marketplace

After discussions of international publishing and intellectual property rights, the conference closed with an informal talk by **Clifford Lynch** of the **University of California**. He contrasted the current client/server environment with that of the past where the information providers had greater control over the data. Now, information is being passed from machine to machine and there is no case law to deal with infringements that may result. He also noted that, while there are technical issues, there is greater tension now on the issue of letting users have the data and not just view it. Then, the issue becomes how to give them access. He also noted that, while there are many fascinating services on the Internet, it is still an inefficient tool for most users. He

sees a need for more filtering of information. One parallel he proposed was for users to register an interest profile and a search engine would provide relevant data. Doing this, however, leads to issues of privacy because the user's interests would be known. Cliff, as usual, gave the audience a provocative look at the philosophical and sociological perspectives confronting us with these new developments.

Summary

In conclusion, the conference was the usual mixture of information from all perspectives. There was perhaps a slight trend this year toward more emphasis upon technology and upon technical services in general than in the past. I, for one, look forward to the publication of the actual papers in *Library Acquisitions: Practice and Theory*. ☛

The 1995 (15th) Charleston Conference

Issues in Book and Serial Acquisition:

Still Crazy After All These Words

November 2-4, 1995

Charleston, SC

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1995 will be a big year for the **Charleston Conference** because it is **15 years old!** Help us to make it the very best Conference ever. The 1995 Charleston Conference will deal with issues regarding acquisitions, collection development and technical services, scholarly publishing and selection of print, electronic and other materials, vending of materials, standards, and issues which impact the world of publishing, vending and acquiring and accessing materials in the library environment.

If you are interested in leading a discussion, acting as a moderator, or would like to make sure that we discuss a particular topic, please let us know. The **Charleston Conference** prides itself on creativity, innovation, flexibility and informality. If there is something you are interested in doing, please try it out on us. We'll probably like it . . .

The Planning Committee for the 1995 Conference includes **Barbara Dean** (Fairfax County Public Library), **Heather Miller** (SUNY-Albany), **Cerise Oberman** (SUNY-Plattsburgh), **Katina Strauch** (College of Charleston) and **Judy Webster** (University of Tennessee Library).

Send ideas by **June 30, 1994** to: **Judy Webster**, Head, Acquisitions and Processing Team; University of Tennessee Library; 1015 Volunteer Blvd.; Knoxville, TN 37996-1000. Phone (615)974-4431; FAX(615)974-2708; Internet: Webster@UTKLIB.LIB.UTK.EDU.