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CD-ROMs and the Future — Some Publishers Talk

by Sherry Thompson (Managing Director, Library Services, Majors Scientific Books)
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Majors Scientific Books' database reflects 1,000 health science, sci-tech, business, and computer CDs as of February 1996. This is an increase of 900 titles in less than two years. The CD explosion has affected everyone working in the information profession in a variety of ways. Majors' account specialists receive calls everyday from librarians that need detailed information about these titles. The amount of calls increases as the number of titles expands. Planning for the future is difficult when the news seems to indicate CDs may be a passing technology. An interview with three key health science and sci-tech publishers gave us some insight as to how decisions are made and what the possible future is for this medium.

Who did we talk to? (1) **Susan Reinhardt**, Director of Marketing and Distributor Sales, is with **Mosby-Yearbook, Inc.** Helping Susan with some of the responses were: Meg White, Anne McKeough, and Tom Hewitt. (2) **Phillip Kerr**, Director of Sales and Marketing, is with **Teton Data Systems** in Jackson, Wyoming. Teton has one main product, STAT-Ref, that incorporates many medical reference books. (3) **Dr. Clifford Butler**, Technology Marketing Manager, is with **Delmar Publishers** which also includes **International Thomson Publishing**.

Question 1: How do you decide what print products should be put on CD? Do you see the relationship between CD-ROM and print format changing? Do you foresee CD usage replacing book usage?

Susan Reinhardt, Director of Marketing and Distributor Sales, **Mosby-Yearbook, Inc.:**

Heavy reference titles where the searching capabilities are far superior to what an index or TOC could offer are candidates for CD-ROM. Yes, the relationship between CD-ROM and print is changing. Academic/Review titles on CD-ROM can greatly enhance learning through immediate interactive feedback and a more tailored approach to learning for each individual. Do we foresee CD usage replacing book usage? Publishers are being called upon to become "media neutral" — to bring their expertise on content delivery to bear on the medium that is most suitable and most desirable to the end user. No one sees the book disappearing as an information storage platform. It's convenient, portable, affordable, and BEST OF ALL — easy to use. However, we will see a shift in certain areas to more useful and efficient platforms for information delivery.

Phillip Kerr, Director of Sales and Marketing, **Teton Data Systems:**

Because we carry multiple products on a single CD we choose titles that are aimed at the general medicine market (Internal Medicine texts, drug references). The market for CD titles is smaller than the print market so it is important to produce CD versions of titles that have a large enough audience to support an electronic version. Most customers we deal with use the CD for rapid searching and text retrieval from multiple titles. Many publishers are limiting their markets by producing a separate CD for each title. We produce a single CD and allow the customers to "unlock" up to 30 titles on that one disc. Most doctors

continue to use books when they want to sit down and read. Most will purchase both the CD and the book.

Dr. Clifford Butler, Technology Marketing Manager, **Delmar Publishers:**

CD's like the Internet will not replace books; however both new mediums are changing the mix of print versus electronic delivery of content. In some subject areas electronic delivery will exceed print, in others, print will continue to be the primary delivery method. A print product is considered for CD/electronic delivery where the new medium allows for expanded functionality for the user ... i.e. more photos, relevant animation, sound files, etc. We also consider how the user will use the material, the state of computers within a particular field of study and how fast the marketplace is changing.

Question 2: How do you decide whether to offer standalone CDs, networked CDs, online products or other multimedia formats?

Susan Reinhardt, **Mosby-Yearbook, Inc.:**

Any product is best designed with the needs of the end user in mind. Publishers are focusing on utilizing new technology in order to best meet those needs. Some projects work best in a network situation, such as teaching and training tools. Some references are most applicable for a single user or site license arrangement. Online applications are for time-sensitive, rapidly changing material. Multimedia with a high level of video and audio is not networkable in the traditional sense, but new versions of WWW browsers that utilize JAVA will have the capabilities to deliver these elements over the Internet.

Phillip Kerr, **Teton Data Systems:**

The online market is growing but the infrastructure is still lacking. We currently produce CDs for standalone and for networks. Networks are by far the fastest growing segment of the market.

Dr. Clifford Butler, **Delmar Publishers:**

So far, we are primarily interested in developing standalone product to accommodate the marketplace. Most networks do not deliver multimedia well yet, but that too is about to change. The primary consideration for format is: who is the ultimate consumer and how do they plan on using the product? at home, in school, in a media lab?

Question 3: How long do you believe CDs will be a viable medium? What trends are becoming evident in the multimedia industry? In particular, what other forms of multimedia do you see on the horizon?

Susan Reinhardt, **Mosby-Yearbook, Inc.:**

The choice of platforms will continue to increase with the most efficient, economical and pervasive delivery method for the user taking precedence. And different users will want different methods. Specifically, the proliferation of JAVA will allow for even more applications to run on the Internet, easily portable to a variety of users. Networks are likely to become the standards in academic and profes-

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sional settings.

Philip Kerr, Teton Data Systems:

It is clear online will be the future once the infrastructure is in place. The big question is when that will be. Our prediction is that networks will continue to grow and improve. Networks are, after all, mini online environments. CDs and installations at LAN/WANs will be the best distribution method for the next five years. CDs will incorporate more and more links into online databases and, once fast enough wires are in place, CD as a distribution means will fade away.

Dr. Clifford Butler, Delmar Publishers:

CDs are still efficient as a storage medium; however the Internet is far less expensive and will be the depository of a great deal of content in the future. The trend is toward online delivery methods /companion online web sites for print product. On the horizon is full video, sound, animation and content over fiber optics or other wide-band delivery methods.

Question 4: What changes have you made in marketing multimedia as opposed to marketing books?

Susan Reinhardt, Mosby-Yearbook, Inc.:

One of the biggest differences from book marketing has been the need for demo-ing the product. This has meant outfitting reps with multimedia computers and in some instances producing special sample disks that explain and demo the product in a self-running format. However, in the long run, the importance of demo-ing will decrease — the mediums will mature, customers will have some history with it, confidence levels will build, and hardware will stabilize a bit making the out-of-box experience a more successful one. In some instances, the product is marketed much closer to the actual launch date to avoid the "vaporware" reputation. Packaging is a much more critical issue.

Philip Kerr, Teton Data Systems:

We don't market books. We license material to put on CD and sell CD-ROMs.

Dr. Clifford Butler, Delmar Publishers:

We have been enclosing multimedia within print products and also standalone product. Packaging changes have been the most radical area of change along with pricing decisions which are always in flux with multimedia product. Multimedia product tends to have a shorter life-cycle, so you will see more revisions than with print.

Question 5: How would you describe the trends in pricing for the next decade?

Susan Reinhardt, Mosby-Yearbook, Inc.:

One of the biggest challenges and certainly one of the most crucial issues that face publishers today is our ability to fairly value our content, regardless of the medium. We have become accustomed to the traditional "one book, one price" scenario and the paradigm has shifted. The delicate balance of what the market will pay, what the product will cost to produce, and how many units will be sold isn't as cut and dry as it used to be. But there are a few things that are very evident in health care and one of them is price sensitivity. And it's also evident that it will be a factor in our market for some time to come. The proliferation of "free" information on the Internet will have both a positive and negative effect. Positive because it will make the publishers' filtering process all the more valuable. Negative because there are those who will become accustomed to the reams of information available — valuable or not, and think it should all be free.

Philip Kerr, Teton Data Systems:

Pricing for CDs will drop to the level of book pricing and stabilize there.

Dr. Clifford Butler, Delmar Publishers:

Pricing will continue to be competitive with lower pricing trends of consumer products effecting educational products. Publishers will be faced with the decision of lowering prices during a product's life or adding functionality and content to enhance value to maintain price points.

Question 6: How are sales going compared to your projections?

Susan Reinhardt, Mosby-Yearbook, Inc.:

In context, sales of multimedia and electronic product are increasing exponentially. However, they are still far from achieving the revenue derived from book sales.

Philip Kerr, Teton Data Systems:

Sales for the past two years have been about 30% above projections.

Dr. Clifford Butler, Delmar Publishers:

Sales are ahead of most forecasts on most of our multimedia products ... in some cases double our initial expectations. This is a rapidly changing marketplace being driven by multiple segments of the industry including publishers, educators, computer hardware and software interests, the phone companies and various online services. The consumer is being deluged as never before with technology.

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Send ideas by **June 30, 1996**, to Barbara Dean, Technical Operations Center, 4000 Stringfellow Rd., Chantilly, VA 22021. Phone (703)222-3139; fax (703)222-3135. Internet: <bdean@leo.vsla.edu>.