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A Conversation with Kevin Guthrie

Executive Director, JSTOR

by Katina Strauch, Head, Collection Development, College of Charleston Libraries

Recently yours truly was evaluating JSTOR as an expenditure for the College of Charleston Libraries. Kevin Guthrie was kind enough to spend a lot of time on the telephone with me. I thought that you ATG readers would benefit from a partial reconstruction of that conversation. Here it is. — KS

KS: How are the journals selected for inclusion in JSTOR? As I understand it, you have only selected 50 of the 100 titles to data.

KG: At this time, we have signed agreements with publishers to include 52 journals in JSTOR's first phase. We have conversations underway with other publishers, but those haven't been concluded yet. As we fill out the list of titles, we will continue to welcome the input of librarians and scholars in making these selections. To date, journals have been selected using the following criteria: a) surveys of academics in the particular field; b) journals with at least 1,000 institutional subscribers; c) committees of scholars and librarians working in concert with JSTOR personnel; d) ISI citation impact information; along with a variety of other qualitative factors.

KS: At the present time, I don't see any science journals included. Will they be included in JSTOR II or in the second half of Phase I?

KG: In JSTOR Phase I, we hope to include the most important research journals in 10-15 fields of study, primarily in the social sciences and the humanities. We have not chosen to *exclude* the sciences, it's just that we felt that social sciences and humanities would benefit greatly

from what we are trying to do. We do not think that the appeal of JSTOR is limited to particular fields and we hope someday that science journals will also find it worthwhile to participate in the project.

After Phase I, JSTOR will offer journals and journal clusters to libraries in a wider variety of ways. Libraries will be able to pick and choose from among the selections those titles that are most relevant and valuable for their users.

KS: Do you have a number of journals that you expect to be in the entire JSTOR database eventually?

KG: Well, that's a very difficult question to answer; there are so many journals out there! I guess my brief answer would be that we will continue to add titles as long as it seems beneficial to the scholarly community for us to do so.

KS: How will a library like the College of Charleston be able to influence the decision of the journals which JSTOR will include? We are especially interested in JSTOR's relevance to undergraduates.

KG: It will be difficult for an individual library to influence the titles in the database; we now have quite a few libraries participating. But we do want library input, and we are working on developing mechanisms for JSTOR participating libraries to provide that for us. As for the database's usefulness to undergraduates, I think we will see increasing use of the material in these journals because they will be far more convenient to use. Undergraduates tend to use what they can get fast and easily. We have all probably heard the story of the undergraduate who, when he couldn't find articles online about his paper topic, decided he had to change the topic! Anyway, there is some evidence that our test sites saw more use of these materials by undergraduates than they expected. And faculty at those institutions definitely value it.

It is important to remember, though, that we are focused on core research journals. If our objectives do not fit your constituency, it is probably better for you to wait until we offer titles that are a better fit. This is a fundamental question that each library will have to consider.

KS: Access to the journals loaded in JSTOR is a problem in the Web environment. Do you have any plans to make the contents available through abstracting and indexing services?

KG: We recognize that there are going to be a myriad of ways that people will want to "get to" the journal articles, and we encourage that. For example, we have had libraries request stable addresses for the journal titles so that they can point directly to the title from a library catalog system. We also understand that students and researchers use a variety of abstracting and indexing services to access information and we are working on making this possible. Accomplishing this is somewhat more complicated both in terms of the technology involved and the business relationships that should operate. But it is something we are working on.

KS: How about printing and display of pages? Is it realistic to view and print pages on less than a 17" monitor? Most of us don't have access to this type of equipment yet.

KG: There are standard default selections that are part of the JSTOR system, but users can use a feature we call "set options" to customize some aspects of the environment for their machine. For example, if you have a smaller monitor, you might want the pages to display in a smaller size so you don't have to scroll from left-to-right when you read the page. We offer a variety of page sizes ranging from very small to large that can be selected by the user.

Where possible, we have designed JSTOR to work well on standard equipment. When that is not possible, we try to give users more control over how they want things to appear.

In the case of printing, we rely on a printer helper application to allow the user to print articles from a variety of computer platforms to a variety of printers. Users can choose whether they want to print at higher resolution (600 dpi) or lower resolution (150 dpi) which is a smaller file and will therefore download faster. 🐉

NB: For another discussion of this project, see *Library Journal*, February 1, 1997, pp. 42-44. — KS

