December 1996

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Publishing Research Quarterly

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Recommended Citation

Henderson, Albert and Simmonds, Albert (1996) "Op-Ed-Who Has Kept the Tempest in the Teapot?," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 8: Iss. 6, Article 10.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.2173>

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Who Has Kept the Tempest in the Teapot? by Albert Henderson <70244.1532@CompuServe.com>

A great crisis has stormed through the academic library community for many years, sustained by the official authority of the **Association of Research Libraries (ARL)** and related groups. So it is puzzling to find so little evidence of this tempest in the stream of writings about "what's wrong with higher education" and "where is science policy taking us." In the collection of essays titled *The Research University in a Time of Discontent* (Edited by Jonathan R. Cole et al. Johns Hopkins, 1994), for instance, the discontent of library managers and patrons has been mercilessly shut out. Nearly all the 19 authors are affiliated with members of the ARL. Some are, or have been, president or provost at Columbia, Cornell, Duke, Johns Hopkins, or University of California. Only former Stanford president Donald Kennedy acknowledges that libraries are in bad shape and steadily getting worse. Kennedy then demonstrates the chasm separating the library and the president's office as he mischaracterizes library expenditures, describing them as among the fastest-growing items in university budgets.

Most of the contributors express discontent with the scarcity of resources. Little is said of how the administrative expenditures (according to the *Digest of Education Statistics*) have been allowed to grow more rapidly than any other category (while library spending has been held in check since the early 1970s). Again, it is only Kennedy who explains the administrative cost disease in terms of staff increases to support opportunistic growth in areas not supported by sponsored research income: procurement, personnel, housing, etc. This uncontrolled growth of the "indirect" cost of research eventually became a liability. Bookkeepers' errors turned into audit nightmares. The episode ended with brutal refunding of millions of dollars to the government: brutal because no one demanded that the misposted money be used to restore subscriptions canceled at Stanford and other top research institutions.

Productivity is a political issue, with Congressional leadership periodically demanding concrete evidence of how public investments in research are returned to society. In the discussions of productivity that were crafted by Kennedy and others, it would seem that knowledge resources as a productivity factor — described by economist Fritz Machlup as the resource that determines what research and education do and how — has been swept aside in favor of a more complex and shallow buzzword-based approach. The favored response of these writers to questions and criticisms continues to be an asser-

tion of academic independence, which is a doctrine designed to protect excellence in the classroom rather than the back office ineptitude defended here.

Not one of the papers that discuss "indirect costs" take up the role of libraries in the performance of research. Former NSF director Walter Massey, now a professor of physics and provost at the University of California, appears to seek to ratify past policies. The policies affecting reimbursement for library and other indirect support of research have been defined for the White House by a handful of university presidents. They have little to do with the libraries as used by the R&D community or as managed by professional librarians. Specifically, they ignore the use of libraries by off-campus researchers and the pivotal role of library research in the preparation of original grant proposals and peer review. The lack of a reasoned financial policy was driven home to librarians (but not to the science policy directorate) a few years ago when most large academic libraries were forced to cancel thousands of subscriptions as a result of a devaluation of the U.S. dollar.

Academic libraries are also major importers of foreign science, technology, and culture. At least, they were when the Alexandrian model of comprehensive collecting was in fashion and within the purchasing capability of most large libraries. The fact that the U.S. imported most of its technology prior to World War II is ignored by MIT professor of political science Eugene B. Skolnikoff, who decries the foreign exploitation of U.S. research and its impact on the balance of trade. Although roughly two thirds of all academic research is authored outside the U.S., Skolnikoff implies that American authors generate the most, if not the most interesting, research. A more convincing argument would hold the research university, with its unique library resources, to be the most likely candidate to turn the tide with an aggressive screening and digest of primary research reported throughout the world. Skolnikoff supplies a revealing aperception by charging, "parochial attitudes among US faculty." He also blames restrictions on the international flow of knowledge proposed by government censors. Actually, a major restriction on the import of foreign research has been the ax of financial officers applied to library collection development and to library research in general.

And why have these writers, who represent the cabal of Washington insiders, missed the crisis which has dominated the library landscape like Hurricane Hortense in Puerto

Rico? Why isn't that controversial *Report of the ARL Serials Prices Project* dated May 1989, which recounted a series of subscription cancellations at many large research universities, reflected here? Where is any reference made to the highly persuasive ARL annual statistics, showing how skyrocketing photocopying balances declining holdings? As publishers themselves, there can be no question but that many associations of scientists, scholars, instructors, educators, and accreditation counselors have been unofficially aware that library collections are headed for oblivion. In my opinion, they have kept mum because leadership in the library community has been ambivalent. ARL has collected statistics since 1981, for instance, on the declining share of university expenditures — yet it has released only a sample of these and continues to exclude them from their annual roundup volume. Aside from alienating learned publishers and authors — the very organizations that could easily influence public opinion, policy and funding — with blame for their woes, the major response of the library associations has been to adjust the *ALA National Interlibrary Loan Code* (1994) and to emasculate the *ACRL Standards for University Libraries* (1989), rather than to broadcast how substandard their collections have become. While librarians cannot be held responsible for the destruction of the fabled collection at Alexandria by fire, they might well be blamed for the future demise of modern libraries by frozen budgets.

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Standards by Albert Simmonds (Director, Standards/Development, R.R. Bowker; Chairperson, BISAC)

During the nineteenth century there developed in both the U.K. and the U.S. pioneering efforts to systematize and cumulate the catalogs of publishers' output, to the benefit of both booksellers and librarians. This work was based at least partly on the premise that maintaining a smooth flow of accurate information about all the various aspects of the publishing industry helps to keep this industry healthy. The development of and adherence to standards has always been crucial to creating and maintaining this flow of information. This statement was true for the Amherst College librarian Melvil Dewey. It was also true for David Whitaker and Emery Koltay when they introduced what is probably the most important standard of all, the ISBN. What would the modern computerized publishing industry look like if we did not have the ISBN "to identify each iteration of the titles actively in circu-

lation?" This question becomes even more significant when you place it in the perspective of 150,000 new products each year which is the (rather amazing) output of the U.S. publishing industry over the past few years.

This characteristic of the publishing industry, that each new title, new edition, new binding, is treated as a separate new product is one of the major obstacles to clear product data transmission within the publishing industry. It is also one of the major reasons that we must set up standards for our systems and comply with them. The standards being examined in this and the previous issue of *ATG* mostly relate to the need to develop and maintain electronic data interchange (EDI) among all the various concerned groups within the industry. Included first and foremost are the publishers who must bring together the information (the title

of the book; its authors, editors, illustrators; ISBN; price; etc.) and must get this data into their systems. Then they must develop the capability to begin the transmission of this data to all concerned parties: the wholesalers and information companies, and eventually the libraries and retailers.

And all this work must be informed by industry standards if we are to maintain a smooth flow of accurate information. Who are the guardians of these standards? Ultimately, they are the kind of people who read publications such as *ATG*. Sandy Paul and I have both been involved in setting a joint AAP/ALCTS workshop on SGML for this year's ALA Annual convention. And in addition to urging you to be active in such standards activities, we would also urge you to make adherence to standards one of the hallmarks of your thinking as information professionals.

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often do not search the most appropriate material or even search it effectively.

Having the ability to obtain information directly from a supplier, computer users can bypass the library entirely. The virtual library then becomes a gateway for information rather than a repository for that information. The information provider or publisher may then assume the library's role of repository. But can we expect the information provider or publisher to perform this role indefinitely? Tax laws (Thor Power Tool decision) require publishers to pay tax on their inventory. This results in shorter print runs and in materials going out of print within a relatively short period. In the shift to electronic publishing, tax legislation may be modified to include electronic storage. This would result in the same situation as currently prevails for books. Publishers will keep available only those items which generate revenue.

Impact of the Internet

We are seeing many publishers establishing their presence on the Internet. While the Internet used to be an exclusively academic enterprise providing "free" resources to scholars and researchers, it is shifting to a commercial enterprise. More and more companies and businesses are realizing that they have to get on the Internet to maintain business because their competition is already there.

Outside of the college and university environment, service providers offer Internet access much the way they do for CompuServe, America Online, Delphi, or Prodigy which also provide Internet access. They have a fee schedule for their services

and monthly access charges for those who don't have access through an educational institution. As government funding that has supported the Internet disappears, commercial organizations will take over the "administration" of the Internet from the non-profit institutions. Publishers and information providers who currently offer some of their assets on the Internet will probably charge increasingly higher fees. Right now, they are studying usage patterns and experimenting with pricing models. This will probably result in a variety of pricing models that may go into effect soon.

A growing number of magazine titles is being transferred to the Internet. While some titles are available only in electronic format, the majority continue to publish in both paper and electronic formats. Eventually, many will follow the lead of *Omni* and cease publication in paper and appear only in electronic form.

The increased use of document delivery is making publishers realize that they can use copyright royalties as a significant source of revenue to bolster sagging subscription income. As libraries cancel subscriptions, publishers need to find a broader subscription base by going directly to the end-user. However, many library subscriptions result from end-user requests which shift the costs to the libraries. Libraries that adopt the pay-per-use model of document delivery provide the information their patrons need but have nothing for the next patron who may want the same item. They have to buy it again. If publishers depend entirely on a pay-per-use model, they will need to recoup their costs on a smaller number of articles which will probably drive up document delivery costs. The laws of supply and demand will regulate the price of individual articles; and copyright owners can be expected to

charge whatever the market will bear. It's conceivable that a single article may eventually cost more than the current price of an entire issue of a journal.

The Preservation Question

Libraries have performed the function of archiving published material. They have insured that a permanent record of a publication exists. If one library doesn't have an item, it can usually obtain it from another library. In an electronic environment, are we shifting that archiving responsibility to the publisher or information provider? Judging by the rapidity that materials currently go out of stock or out of print and become unavailable, is it reasonable to assume that publishers and information providers will maintain and preserve this data for future use?

Some libraries may contract with publishers to store copies on their computers. However, many may determine that storage costs, whether for print or electronic formats, are not cost effective and remove those materials from the collection. While electronic storage makes it easier to distribute information, copyright owners may restrict this practice through licensing arrangements, fee structures, watermarks, or encryption techniques that prevent or prohibit wide dissemination. The economics that drive the shift to electronic format will also sort out the access question. In a free enterprise market, the price determines the volume sold to the target market. When publications become too expensive for their market, alternative sources will develop. This might result in the library becoming a repository for books or an information source for the information underprivileged — those who don't have the necessary hardware to access information electronically.