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And They Were There

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And They Were There

NORTH AMERICAN SERIALS INTEREST GROUP

by *Bill Robnett* (Vanderbilt University)

The Fifth Annual North American Serials Interest Group Conference took place June 2-5, 1990, at Brock University, St. Catherine's, Ontario, Canada.

Lucretia McClure, Director of the Edward G. Miner Library, University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry and President-Elect of the Medical Library Association, opened the Fifth NASIG Conference with her keynote address, "The Last Issue." The journal itself, according to McClure, is the problem. Rapidly increasing prices, changes in the way researchers communicate, completely new topics, reduced periodical acquisitions budgets, selection of only English-language publications with that reduced purchasing power, and the

quantitative emphasis on article production for tenure are among the challenges to confront. Solutions are not simple nor are they quick.

McClure advocates librarians participating in the qualitative assessment of literature and sharing that information with colleagues throughout academic and other institutions. Librarians should be less collection- and more person-oriented in broadening channels of communication. At the same time they must help elucidate their own role in education and understand libraries' roles in scholarship and research.

Cost and value of literature are better understood now, although the economic value of the product

is currently distorted. McClure mentioned alternatives that are touted as addressing this imbalance, such as societies reassuming publishing roles and electronic publishing. In the latter, she described current print publication in terms of which types are suited to be disseminated electronically (specialty publications with small circulations) and those which might be prohibitively expensive in that format, e.g. *New England Journal of Medicine*.

McClure exhorted her audience to be active on two fronts: the current, on which we must support quality when working with researcher/colleagues and institutional administrators, as well as pursue alternative methods of

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Thanks go as well to Ballen Booksellers for mailing issues of *Against the Grain*.

publishing; and the long-range, on which we should examine the structures and mechanisms of scholarly communication and assume leadership to result in positive changes.

In a paper read by Susan Collins of the University of New Brunswick/St. John, Gayle Garlock, Associate Librarian for Collection Development and Preservation at the University of Toronto, described "The Crisis of Rising Serial Prices in a Canadian Context." That 90% of Toronto's budget is spent on foreign purchases has prompted analysis of the pricing situation, resulted in a search for internal funds within the university, spurred negotiations for better prices, and stimulated inter-library cooperation. While negotiations for more favorable prices have not been successful, the university has protected the acquisitions budgets by mandating that the 1979 buying power of the Canadian dollar against foreign currencies would be maintained.

Garlock acknowledges this is a temporary solution while Toronto seeks resolution to the fundamental problems. Nevertheless, while a national mandate supports science and engineering information collections, it is thought that humanities and social sciences collections are regressing.

Brenda Hurst, Head of Acquisitions at the Canadian Institute for Scientific and Technical Information (CISTI), described Canada's national mandate embodied by her organization and its services and collections. CISTI is a division of the National Research Council and collects exhaustively in natural sciences, technology, engineering, and biomedicine to support economic, regional, and social development in Canada. To meet this mission, it has the fifth largest acquisitions budget in North

America and has exchange agreements with organizations in 70 other countries.

Services are well-supported within CISTI, according to Hurst. A bilingual on-line inquiry system of 41 databases and a document delivery system are maintained. Additionally a current awareness service, a scientific numeric database system of crystallographic, thermodynamic, and infrared spectral data, and a MEDLARS literature service are available to CISTI clients. In a collaborative program, CISTI and the National Library of Canada maintain a *Union List of Science Serials in Canadian Libraries* for more than 300 libraries.

From the University of Western Ontario, Patricia Grieg, Associate Director for Public Services, and Becky Rogers, Space Planning and Administrative Librarian, shared the results of their serials cost study entitled "The Elephant and Mouse Revisited." The study was to determine if the Faxon periodicals price index published in *Library Journal* is valid in their local setting. The resulting in-house index did closely profile the Faxon survey results, but they are still somewhat reluctant to use their index.

The average price in the Faxon survey was US \$147; for UWO's index, US \$178 or \$C211. Grieg and Rogers developed a theoretical model to apply to their local budget situation, which indicated that the price increase from 1989 to 1990 averaged 9.35%; the actual increase was 4.34%. They described their investigation as an historical study showing industry trends rather than describing actual impacts on institutional budgets.

Frederick (Fritz) Schwartz of the Faxon Company described that corporation's project with electronic data interchange (EDI),

which is structured, non-ASCII-based, non-MARC or MARC-like data units for the transfer of business information across industries without human mediation. EDI decreases routine clerical tasks, rectifies buyer/seller discrepancies, streamlines operations, and facilitates electronic fund transfer. For the serials community, EDI is important as its use is characteristic of the most progressive industries and is now used in the book industry. EDI is poised for enormous growth, has been adopted by the larger data processing community, and facilitates systems that are functionally integrated, such as universities and their libraries.

Faxon is working with a group that includes Welch Medical Library of Johns Hopkins, Miles Laboratories, and the University of Minnesota, NOTIS, and publishers such as Plenum, John Wiley, Kluwer, and the National Research Council (Canada), among others, in a pilot project to investigate applications for data transfer between libraries and publishers and serials vendors. The project should identify costs and technical and logistical issues in such exchange and help decrease paper flow in operations such as claiming.

The editor and publisher of *Choice*, Patricia Sabosik, presented "Managing Electronic Subscriptions," in which she compared electronic subscription licensing agreements with paper subscriptions. The former, said Sabosik, is explicit about the exchange of information, while the latter is an implied agreement. As the use of electronic

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workstations increases among scholars and researchers, these groups move closer toward the sources of information; as a result, the roles of publishers and libraries change.

The negotiation of the license is the most significant administrative aspect for electronic subscriptions. Also to be weighed carefully are the circulation of electronic information, management of the electronic library, providing or restricting access, and funding and budgeting. Dual acquisitions of both formats, a more costly practice but more common presently, will give way to subscribing to only the electronic format, particularly given the existence of integrated automated library systems in libraries.

Brian Scanlan of Elsevier moderated the panel discussion, "The Peer Review Process: Strengths and Weaknesses." Bruce Dancik, Assistant Editor-in-Chief for the *Canadian Journal of Forest Research*, stated that for all its weaknesses, the peer review process still improves the quality of manuscripts, helps to avoid some fraud, and most importantly, encourages careful investigation and better experimentation and writing. Critics, he acknowledges, feel that the process unduly delays publication and increases the cost of publishing. For Dancik's journal that cost in about \$C100, a defensible expense given the results. The most serious concern is that peer review may eliminate innovative science because it can favor "unadventurous nibblings at the margins of truth."

A second panelist, Anne Weller, Deputy Librarian for the Health Sciences at the University of Illinois/Chicago, then described the origins and evolution of the peer review process. She is currently comparing editorial and review

processes in two groups of indexed journals and has concluded that each step in peer review has the potential for bias. An example is editors' solicitation of papers for submission to journals. One editor interviewed by Weller felt that all reviewers bring some bias into the process. Many involved in the process feel that time is the ultimate validator, since the initial scrutiny is continued by other investigators after publication.

Lewis Gidez, Director of Publications for the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB), reported the results of his survey of about 2,000 FASEB members regarding their perceptions of the peer review process and on the *FASEB Journal*. In addition to gathering data on how many papers members are reviewing, he also tested perceptions of time taken for the review process measured against actual time taken. For example, 2% of members thought initial review took about two-to-four weeks; 18% thought four-to-six weeks; 40% thought more than eight weeks. Gidez found that for the initial review process, 17% took two-to-four weeks, 55% took four-to-six weeks, and 2% took longer than eight weeks. When polled about anonymity of reviews, 73% advocated such, 20% said no, and 7% had no opinion.

The final panelist, Bruce Squires, Editor-in-Chief of the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* described peer review as absolutely essential and to the benefit of all parties. Editors, said Squires, can hasten the process, but should clearly define the standards for publication, since problems result when authors and reviewers do not know what the editors want. The proper role of editors is to edit—diligently, objectively, and ethically. However, Squires acknowledged that some fraud and delays will occur.

Kenneth Marks, former University Librarian at Utah State University (USU), now at East Carolina University, and Steve Nielsen, Fiscal Officer at Utah State, presented the results of their "Longitudinal Study of Journal Prices in a Research Library." Their initial sample of 1000 titles from a 1971 USU subscription list was ultimately reduced to 370 journals for which complete local data was available from 1967 through 1987. Foreign prices were converted to US dollars and adjusted for inflation using sources appropriate to each year.

The investigators found that dollar inflation accounted for most of the US subscription increases over that time: in current dollars an inflation factor of 10; 3 in constant dollars. In current dollars cost per page had increased six-fold; in constant dollars, 50%. In determining the ratio of US/original currency to examine the possibility of differential pricing, that ratio was 1.3 in 1967, and 1.1 in 1986-87 with bulges in 1981 and 1986. Their conclusion was that differential pricing did not contribute significantly to the overall price increase. In comparing cost trends within disciplines, they found larger increases in some but not of sufficient size to use subject as the sole basis of explanation for those increases.

When examining the costs for three unnamed non-US publishers, Marks and Nielsen determined that 95% of the three publishers' titles in their study were among the 158 (or 40% of the titles in the survey) most expensive titles in cost-per-page. The investigators summarized by stating that (1) it was difficult to determine any one factor from their study that explains the price difference for US buyers and that (2) foreign publishers' prices had increased much faster. The two

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did not see any implications of price gouging, but if higher production costs are incurred by some publishers, then the community of US research libraries deserves a clear explanation, said Marks.

Dorothy Milne of the Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN) presented the results of her and Bill Tiffany's study, "A Cost-Per-Use Method for Weeding a Journal Collection." Measuring the use of titles in the MUN library collection was the basis for keep/cancel decisions. The cost-per-use was compared to the estimated ILL borrowing cost; if the latter were less, the title would be cancelled. The range of cost-per-use in Milne and Tiffany's study was \$0.03 to \$1,000. The study concentrated on the most recent five years of a periodical within which a significant portion of the

use would occur, and six uses (hashmarks by readers on front covers) was the threshold.

The investigators also looked at eight major commercial publishers for cost-effectiveness of titles and found that 44% by dollars amount would have been cost-ineffective if the six-mark limit had been rescinded. Marks and Tiffany acknowledged that in general the titles of this group of eight were more effective on the cost-per-use basis than the complete subscription group in their library: 18% by dollar cancelled for the group of eight versus 26% for the entire periodical collection.

"Serials Cataloging: Time for a New Perspective" was read by Pat Rice of Penn State for Sheila Intner of Simmons College Graduate School of Library and Information Science. Intner proposes a new paradigm for serials cataloging, which provides access to smaller

bibliographic units within serials. She calls this the theory of physical equivalence. The current model is the theory of bibliographic equivalence under which one serial title is the equivalent of one monographic title; this ignores serial content. The current emphasis on the seriality of works assumes statis, says Intner. She maintains that cataloging should move toward emphasis on the monographic nature of works, such as an annual volume or one volume of a series.

Intner questioned whether our current finding tools are necessary if physical equivalence is assumed. The broad indexing characteristic of most services has created havoc, according to the author, by providing more access to materials often outside the scope, and particularly the budgets, of local collections. Savings realized by no longer purchasing the commercially produced indexes

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can be applied to cataloging department funding to enable physical equivalence serials cataloging. Expert systems may, in the future, further facilitate access when physical equivalence is adopted.

Mid-Year ASIS - A Bird's Eye View

Nestor L. Osorio (Northern Illinois University)

"Microcomputing in the 1990's Unlocking the Power" was the theme of the mid-year meeting of the American Society for Information Science held at Fort Lauderdale, Florida, May 13-17.

The keynote speaker **John Sifonis**, Vice-President of Barker & Sloane was involved for several years in the MIT project "Management in the Nineties," a project that studied the way information technology affects and influences the strategy and structure of organizations. Some of the issues the speaker explored, as part of this study, were: the impact information technology has in the organization; gaining a competitive advantage through information technology; management of human resources in a new setting; and the management of data as a corporate resource. The impact PC's have on an organization, and how technology will affect the office at home is also important. The critical success factor for survival in the 1990's, the author said, will be the capability to change.

John Phillips from Martin Marietta presided at a session on Microcomputer Based Records Management. John spoke about the knowledge required to implement a Records Management automation project. Problems usually encountered in setting up such a system, capabilities and limitations, and examples of successful results were presented.

A session on Computer Assisted Instruction was moderated by **Tom Kinney** of the University of Florida. This session focused on the use of new technology - hypertext, intelligence user interfaces, multimedial workstations - for education and training. **Craig Locatis**, presented some emerging designs for interactive technology, while **Martin A. Siegel** and **Suzanne J. Shaw** discussed issues of library staff training using these technologies.

There were two sessions about the skills needed for information professionals in the 1990's. In the one moderated by **Phillip King**, **Michael Sambuco** suggested that a liberal arts education with proper computer skills will be required for information workers in the industrial setting. Sambuco said that we need to educate people for an information society where computer proficiency integrated across all disciplines is necessary. In the second session **Prudence Ward Dalrymple** described a course at the University of Illinois, Urbana - Champaign that teaches students of library science about users' behavior, information seeking patterns and other related issues present when accessing electronic resources. **Keith H. Stirling** spoke of the need of graduates from library schools to have a clear understanding of different options available in the systems, knowledge of documentation skills and file manipulations.

On the topic of Human-Machines Interfaces, **Linda Bills** presented the results of a survey about CD-ROM public access catalogs. The author examined step-by-step the interface paths and options and the search results using different vendors' approaches. **Peter Leibscher** talked about multiple access methods for searching a Hypertext database.

This case showed the results of a study done using undergraduate students as subjects. Four methods of retrieval were used and the authors investigated a series of questions such as: access methods; speed; success rate; satisfaction and learnability. **Gitta Salomon** provided a description of an interactive electronic information KIOSK designed for the ACM Computer-Human Interaction Conference '89.

Michael S. Lynch was the moderator of a session on CD-ROM Networks. Three speakers, **Na-Neng Au**, **Martha Champiny** and **Loren Aman** represented three sites where CD-ROM networks - Meridian, Silver Platter and OPTINET respectively - are operational. They presented how their systems were implemented.

Another topic in the conference was External Connectivity. In this session, the speakers - **Robert Stout**, **Jacquelin Becker** and **Alane Love** - explained how the integration of online searching and internal communication took place in their corporate environment. The cases presented are the responses of Information Centers to their corporate approach of implementing integrated office systems without taking into consideration the external connectivity needs of the library. As everyone knows, it is not possible to attend every presentation of a conference in addition to business meetings. Therefore, not everybody that was there is mentioned here. Finally, the weather was moderate and the sun was up most of the time.

Frankfurt is for (Book) Lovers First Impressions of the Frankfurt Book Fair

Barry Fast (Scholarly Book Center)

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Maybe it was the drug addicts in the railroad station. Maybe it was the taste of the hot dogs at the snack bars. Or the purposeful American publishers, sneaker clad women, bulging briefcase clutching men. Whatever it was, Frankfurt felt like home, like New York. It wasn't much cleaner.

My first visit to the famous (infamous?) Frankfurt Book Fair. My hotel had no reservation for me. We exchanged viewpoints, and the manager was called. We talked some more. He asked if I'd flown into Frankfurt on Lufthansa. I had not. I'd come up from Zagreb on Yugoslavian Airlines, which was not as bad as it sounds. But this seemed like a magic question, so I told the manager that I had arrived on Lufthansa, and was immediately provided with a room. Small, clean, remote cable television which I soon discovered carried MTV. I poured two fingers of duty free Scotch and watched Iggy Pop.

Nearly 9000 publishers exhibit at Frankfurt. Picture ALA's summer meeting, and multiply it ten times. Instead of open, glitzy, inviting booths, Frankfurt is dominated by tiny cubicles or large stands which are a rabbit warren of enclosed offices and meeting rooms. You can see books, all right, but people are hidden away. No one wants the competition to see who they are talking to. People are here to buy and sell rights, to do deals. This is a souk for publishers.

All the best rug merchants are here, the honchos from every large publisher. There is money in the air. Hands are being shook, cheeks kissed. Deals.

I'm here to find more publishers for our distribution company,

ISBS. We do warehousing, distribution, and marketing for about forty foreign publishers. I meet with Science Press, the publishing arm of the Chinese National Academy of Sciences. We negotiate carefully every detail of our relationship, sign a contract, take a picture, drink some wine. Every hour, for four days, I talk to publishers. Italians, Chinese, Hungarians, Russians, Germans, Brits, Czechs, Americans, Poles. Talk, change cultural reference, talk. I'm getting tired.

The Russians are the most difficult. How much does this book cost? Don't tell me in rubles; rubles have no exchange rate. No, we can't figure on a ruble costing \$.65. That makes your book cost \$40; it's worth \$15. How much does a Big Mac cost in Moscow? That works out to six dollars, by your exchange rate. Big Macs cost two bucks in New York, and things are more expensive there than in Moscow. Your Big Mac should cost less than ours. If your Big Mac costs the same as our Big Mac, then that book should cost \$15. No thanks, I don't like to drink vodka during the day.

An American publisher announces, proudly, that Ivana Trump will get a couple of million dollars for pretending that she has written two novels, which will actually be composed by a yet to be named experienced author. I am embarrassed. It's one thing to hire a writer for memoirs; it is quite another thing to hire a ghost writer for a novel by a woman whose only fame is that she is separated from a nearly bankrupt speculator. I can't imagine a German or British publisher doing that.

Singapore publishers are friendly, business-like, precise. Germans are the same. The British like to chat for a few minutes, then get down to business. The Italians

insist we go for a glass of wine as we talk. The Hungarians are like Jewish mothers: please, have a snack, a drink, please—no, no, you must have a small glass of wine, come here, sit, have a biscuit. The Russians say that I can send them a fax but they can't send me a fax. Why? We just can't. Later, a Czech explains to me that when we fax Russia it is the middle of the night. When they want to fax us, during the working day, there are no available trunk lines. Everyone is in the office talking to their friends, trying to find food or shoes or cigarettes. At five o'clock they rush out of their offices to stand in line at the food stores.

I have a long conversation with a Saudi bookseller. We talk about everything except the Mideast crisis. I eat Turkish food with British friends. I drink German wine with a French woman; it's good, she says, but nothing like the Loire (she's right). I eat frankfurters in Frankfurt. Should I go to Hamburg, I wonder.

What does it all mean, seriously? There is an amazing array of product (that's what we dealmakers call books). Frankfurt deals power in the publishing business, enabling rights, coeditions, and distribution arrangements made on an international scale. It means more books available to more people. It allows publishers to cooperate on a bigger scale, to plan for the future, to reduce some of the risk. If there were not a Frankfurt Book Fair, we would have to invent one.

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Library Profile

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technology librarians manage their own branch libraries and function as an independent "cluster."

Automation profile: LIAS (Library Information Access System), locally developed, is the Libraries' online catalog, and supports cataloging, circulation, fund accounting, and electronic mail. MicroLIAS, an IBM PC-based version of LIAS, can be used to create and maintain databases by downloading records from LIAS or by manual input of data. Recently Acquisitions implemented the Fund Accounting control System (FACS) of LIAS, which allows online access to and manipulation of acquisitions budget data for twenty library locations. FACS is available to all collection development personnel and library administrators. Library Computing Services, part of Penn State's computing division, is in the process of migrating LIAS from Honeywell to DEC computers. When this project is completed, LIAS development will focus on the acquisitions component. Library personnel work closely with Library Computing Services in developing and implementing each LIAS component. ♣

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For librarians, Frankfurt could be an important experience. You can meet with book suppliers from many countries. There is a librarians/booksellers meeting area reserved for this purpose. You can talk to the top people in larger publishing houses (by appointment only, and usually for just a few minutes), expressing your views on issues of professional interest. You can see, by country, what is being published. There are halls devoted to art books, children's books, and other specific subjects. For anyone with an interest in the book world, and I do mean world, Frankfurt is a worthwhile experience.

****Some tips on attending the Frankfurt Book Fair****

Hotels are full for miles around, and prices go up about 25% for the duration of the fair. The Book Fair office can help find private home accommodations in and around Frankfurt. Many people stay in Weisbaden or Heidelberg, which are less than an hour away by train. Moderately priced hotels in Frankfurt are about \$125.

Germany, indeed all of Western Europe, is expensive. Restaurant prices are comparable to better restaurants in large US cities.

Busses and trams run to the fair, and cost about one dollar. Taxis are comparable to prices in the States.

There are 10 halls the size of a typical ALA convention. You will do a lot of walking. People wear business attire at the Fair. The weather is comparable to our northeast in October. Don't arrive the day before the Fair; give yourself a couple of days to get over jet lag. The Fair will exhaust (and exhilarate) you. ♣

The Nemesis

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Schools, non-profits and government agencies get a price break: \$95.00. \$495.00 outside North America (Only \$8.33 per issue more for foreigners — have they been watching the British or what?) and a special corporate price of \$200.00 each for 10 or more subscriptions. Hey Katina, take a page from this group, break our newsletter down by "type" of subscriber and you could really make some money on *Against the Grain*. For 12 pages (this first issue's size) 12 times a year (144 pages in all) the bargain rate for Europeans et. al. works out to \$3.44 a page. There are lots of quotable quotes in the *Newsletter* and they fit all sizes. ♣

Some Thoughts

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opted out of some years ago when schools of library science became trade schools imparting only vocational training. The obvious and natural avenue of re-entry is to address the problems and relationships of the organization and management of the products of scholarship across space and time in a scholarly way. The obvious and natural time for re-entering the realm of active scholarship is now, a time when scholarship is in a fundamental disarray.

As the first step, I submit that a small cadre of like-minded book people, prepared to commit to the long, arduous and often discouraging course which this transformation of the role of scholarly librarianship and of the scholarly enterprise will require, band together in a committee to formulate a position and an action program aimed at bringing this transformation about. The Charleston Conference has proved itself to be an enduring gathering of book people prepared to consider and investigate radical departures from the presently accepted dogmas of librarianship and the place of libraries. I submit that a handful - 8-12 - of people who have over the years proved themselves to be the backbone of the Conference gather together to explore the way to proceed.