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Issues in Vendor/Library Relations -- Open

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Papa Abel Remembers from page 79

any part of it, but after reflecting on my offer he decided to let us lease the back half. At that time the book trade depended almost exclusively upon the Post Office to ship books. So, a Post Office branch within a couple of blocks made this former garage even more appealing. The building was located about a mile from the College on a main city thoroughfare, so it would not be difficult to move shelves, the book inventory, and the office furniture and equipment. In short, we had found a new home for the small enterprise.

We located a retired carpenter who installed both new and acquired shelving, and constructed a receiving/packing dock with associated worktables on which order file boxes were kept. Our carpenter also built a number of two-sided, five-shelf carts for receiving. The publishers' orders for each shipment were placed on these carts, and these went on to the pricing and billing staff, who were located under a balcony, a space built for accounting and managerial functions. Our entire inventory control — ordering, receiving, pricing, billing,

and accounting system — was as plain and straightforward as our new physical facilities, far from an imposing setup.

Now this recital of the outfitting of our new space and our major in-house routines may seem to some readers a minor indeed boring matter. But all of this was the consequence of a good deal of careful thinking and planning to yield the greatest efficiency we could engineer. Obviously, we were forced to these quarters and exercises by the fact that we no longer enjoyed free rent, utilities, and maintenance, or access to a cheap student labor pool. In short, we faced a second major real-world reality. We now had to continue to operate within the profit margins established by wholesalers to retail bookstores and newsdealers, not the margins comfortable for a specialist dealer who placed low volume orders for a multitude of titles to university and research libraries. Our future was, therefore, entirely at the hands of the cleanest most efficient operation we could design.

The final major change in our mode of operation was to obtain the keenest and most current factual analysis and accounting that would guide us in making informed decisions

with respect to the increasing complexity of the business. To solve this problem we hired an assistant who worked for our CPA and auditor.

By June 1960 we had a new space equipped and laid out for an efficient book operation. We had a dependable staff dedicated to the business of serving academic and research libraries with the specialized books they required. We had met all the terms contained in the purchase agreement with **Reed College**. We had explained the changes to our present library customers and publishers, and we had received no negative feedback. We had taken the first step to regionalize our relationship with the Southwest libraries through the formation of the Los Angeles office. A new creature was now ready to step out on its own. We completed the move in two days over a mid-June weekend thanks to a can-do staff who exerted the strengths needed to make the move without interrupting the business.

The new creature, **Richard Abel & Company, Inc.**, a name that reflects the conception of the staff as the company or band, stepped out, bent on establishing itself as a first-rate, specialist regional bookseller to serve specialist institutions. 🐾

Issues in Vendor/Library Relations — Open

Column Editor: **Bob Nardini** (Group Director, Client Integration and Head Bibliographer, Coutts Information Services) <bnardini@couttsinfo.com>

If you worked for a polling company and phoned people at dinnertime the week long to ask what they thought about open access, the ones who answered at all would probably think you were after their opinion on a kooky college admissions policy from the 1970s, were trying to sell them on the benefits of online banking, were asking about some kind of problem with the cable companies they'd vaguely heard about, or most likely, would have no idea what you meant.

Now if **Ohio State**, **LSU**, or **USC** had announced a new policy of free football tickets for all by way of acknowledging that work carried on at universities is a public good and so to a point ought to be beyond commercialization, then your average non-librarian would recognize this as big news and would fully understand the windfall value for fans, if not how the schools would put the details together without causing a riot.

But when **Harvard** announced that faculty scholarship would be free for all, naturally the news barely registered with the general public, who, as we regularly hear, read books and newspapers in declining numbers, let alone scholarly articles. Among those with whom the news did resonate, however — librarians, publishers, vendors, and a growing number of academics — there's shared recognition that we may be on the edge of paradigm shift in scholarly publishing, if not consensus on the wisdom in the shift. Nor do we have much more clarity on the details of the change than there'd be at the outset of the free tickets idea

although it's clear, in our case, there's no danger of a riot.

That may be small consolation to traditional journals publishers, whose practices over many years, beginning in the 1950s with the rise of **Robert Maxwell's Pergamon Press**, ripened in the 1970s to carry a special odor of inflation and monopoly leading to the near-perpetual "serials crisis," which in time brought about resistance on the part of librarians and others whose actions coalesced in the "open access" movement that blossomed in the 1990s with its culmination, so far, being this news from **Harvard**.

Robert Darnton, Director of **Harvard University Library**, said that the move "represents an opportunity to reshape the landscape of learning" and that it would promote the "widest possible dissemination of the faculty's work." (Darnton, an eminent historian of the book, knows something about the dissemination of scholarly work. A terrific writer, for an engaging account of how **Diderot's Encyclopédie** made its way across Europe, see **Darnton's The Business of Enlightenment**.)

Harvard computer science professor **Stuart Shieber**, who led the campus movement, told the *New York Times* that he doubted the move would undermine the journals industry. The undergraduates who run *The Harvard Crimson*, however, had expressed a different view after **Harvard's** Faculty Council had first proposed the measure in September. "All for Open Access: Let's Welcome the End of For-Profit Academic Publishing," the *Crimson's*

editorial was headlined. Whether or not that comes to pass, the February vote of **Harvard's** full Faculty of Arts and Sciences was unanimous for open access.

Unanimous? If they were asked to vote on how to ride into Boston on the T from Cambridge, it's difficult to see the faculty of famously fractious **Harvard** coming out 100 percent behind the Red Line. In October, after all, a professor of anthropology had been quoted as saying, "We might be shooting ourselves and our young colleagues in the foot." But unanimous it was, by February, and **Darnton's** library now will launch an Office for Scholarly Communication to oversee **Harvard's** open-access repository, while the academic world waits to see what effect the **Harvard** decision will have on the university's peers and so in the end on the structure of scholarly publishing itself.

"As far as I know," **Shieber** said to the *New York Times*, "everyone I've ever talked to is supportive of the underlying principle. Still there is a difference between an underlying principle and specific proposal." Of course that's true, and now that a specific proposal has been endorsed, it's equally true that there's a difference between someone's vote and their behavior later on. Will the **Harvard** plan actually work? The proposal does include an "opt-out" clause, whereby a **Harvard** professor can

request that their article not be placed in the repository. How many will make that request? Hard to imagine how they could take the risk, but would a journal publisher balk at accepting a **Harvard** article (as **Patricia Schroeder**, President of the **Association of American Publishers**, suggested they might), or else insist that the submitting scholar indeed “opt out”? Are there technicalities or procedural or other problems in any part of the system that could derail what **Shieber** and others at **Harvard** have envisioned and now created?

For example, in the Seemed Like a Good Idea at the Time category, earlier this year the **University of Iowa** had to backtrack on a requirement for graduate theses to be posted as open-access documents. Students in **Iowa’s** famous writers’ program, who of course are less interested in gaining scholarly citations for their work than in finding themselves an agent, noticed the new policy, objected, and had it modified on their behalf.

In any case, there are plenty of critics of open access out there and any particular proposal, from **Harvard** or wherever else, no matter how artfully crafted, will draw out at least the skeptics with concerns about peer review, society publishers, university presses, copyright, business models, funding models, and whatever else. After all, a 2005 open access policy at the **National Institutes of Health** caused a stir too but did not turn the scientific publishing world on its head. Of course that system, unlike **Harvard’s**, was “opt-in,” whereby **NIH**-funded authors were requested to submit their finished articles for inclusion in **PubMed**. Not many did. This year, however, **Congress** passed legislation to make **PubMed** deposit a requirement for authors with **NIH** money. Now with the **Harvard** vote and the stronger **NIH** measure, 2008 looks like the year when we will begin to learn what open access really is all about.

What if the **Harvard** repository is successful in a way that journals once important do turn into academic backwaters? How would smart young scholars or scientists working beyond the **Ivy League** make their name if the top journal no longer mattered and the **Harvard** repository, presumably, was closed to them? What about all the press releases we’re used to seeing about newsworthy research published in *Nature* or in *Science*? Will **Harvard** (or whichever repositored university) send out the press release in the future? Not an easy thing to see, that a university would relax and just let *Science* take care of business, later on. What about the editors of commercial journals who teach at **Harvard** or at another university? What are they thinking? What will happen to today’s open access journals, if all scholarship is born free, open access from the start?

Publishers will certainly raise every question they can think of. The industry lobbied against the **NIH** measure and no one figures they’ve thrown in the towel quite yet. Of course it’s easy to oppose something the government does. Challenging the **Harvard**

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policy, though, is a different matter. The faculty vote, again, was unanimous, and just as the Hollywood writers had leverage on the studios, the **Harvard** scholars have leverage on the journal publishers. What are the journals going to do, turn to reruns, put out reality scholarship issues, write their own material, like **Jay Leno** did?

While it was **Shieber** who led the movement in Cambridge, and while the most prominent national advocate of open access has been **Earlham College** professor of philosophy **Peter Suber**, since the beginning of this battle, academic librarians have been in the trenches as well as positioned behind the lines at command central. Anyone who’s cracked a journal issue or dropped by a conference in our field during the past ten or even twenty years would probably have gained some notion, at least, that things were stirring.

And now that the **Harvard** Faculty of Arts and Sciences has come out in favor of open access, any librarian who over these two decades crunched numbers on journals prices, who spoke with a faculty chair, who launched a publishing venture, who met with an administrator, who taught a workshop, who organized a program, who sat on a committee, who wrote an article, who delivered a paper, who edited a newsletter, who wrote a chapter, who posted to a listserv, who met with an attorney, who lobbied a representative, who worked the hallways, who picked up the phone, who blogged, or wrote, or spoke, or worked in any fashion as an advocate of open access, now can feel pretty sure they were part of what will prove a defining moment for librarianship.

In fact it’s difficult to think of anything that compares. **Open stacks**, the **Dewey Decimal System**, **Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules**, the **MARC** record, **OCLC**, of course these were all landmarks. But they were library landmarks, their implications confined to libraries and those who used libraries. Open access, on the other hand, has implications for

people who probably couldn’t find their library. What if **Harvard’s** FAS had been asked for a show of hands on how many had visited or even used the library lately? Do you think the vote would have been unanimous? How many people earlier this year who read about a “government-sponsored study by **Harvard** researchers,” to quote the *New York Times* account of a project that documented declining life expectancy in substantial parts of the United States, published in *PLoS Medicine*, knew that as an open access journal?

Open access connects entirely with what have been core values in librarianship for as long as any of us have been alive. We’re online now and (so far) are not talking about books, and although it was long ago that **Ranganathan** wrote “Books are for Use” and “Every Reader His or Her Book,” if a time machine had transported him from 1930s Madras to 2008 Cambridge for a seat at the **Harvard** FAS vote, he’d have gotten the point right away. If today it’s sometimes a non-MLS who is working the public desk, or selecting the books, or tidying up a cataloging record, that may be because the librarian is busy doing something or other to further what’s become, to many, a mission.

As for materials vendors, they have a mission too, to increase sales, and are as always in position between publishers and librarians. A generation ago, when vendors were more numerous, the basic way to grow business was to leverage publishers and compete on price and service, compete that is with one another and with the publishers too, since in those days they courted direct business. Now most vendors from then are sidelined and those left find it hard to push pricing further, hard to look dramatically different from the competition on service, and find too that the big scientific and academic publishers are, once again, their competitors.

For the people who run research libraries, it’s a good bet that the local implications of

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I Hear the Train A Comin' from page 84

modules which a library can license independently to meet document delivery or current awareness needs in the most effective way. And of course, libraries and end users are the customers whom our publisher partners want to serve through the publication platforms we build, so all of the services I've just talked about are ultimately designed to meet their needs — whether it's by integrating software and content with the tools used by these groups (such as bibliographic managers or RSS readers), or by adhering to industry standards such as COUNTER and OpenURL.

In a world where technology is easier to manage and increasingly inexpensive, why do publications work with companies like Ingenta?

We're increasingly finding that the evidence does not bear out the assumption that technology is becoming easier to manage. In a world of evolving industry standards, demand for more advanced "bells and whistles", seman-

tic Web developments and visibility amongst the vast array of content on the Web, publishers are under pressure to conform to the latest standards, regularly roll out new features and functionality in line with technical advances as well as ensuring their technology is robust, scalable and future proof. A challenge which can be a distraction from publishers' core area of expertise (publishing) which in turn can impact on ROI as technology choices are critical to the success of publishers' businesses. As a result, we're finding that demand for the support of an established technology partner remains strong.

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Technology for publishers is **Ingenta's** core competence, our sole focus, which is why a growing number of publishers (more than 250 now) are seeking **Ingenta's** support for their technical strategy. 🌱

Vendor Library Relations from page 81

Harvard's FAS vote are on everyone's radar. Could be time for materials vendors to have another look at what it is their customers most care about. Getting themselves into the offices of library decisionmakers — vendors have always known the importance of doing that. Without at the least having a few thoughtful things to say about open access and its **Ranganathanian** cousin, fair use, and how in their accustomed in-the-middle position vendors might make a difference, vendors could lose the one kind of open access they've always understood. 🌱

Back Talk from page 86

I think we cannot help but feel some of each emotion. I am leaning toward sending the existing downloaders emails asking them to provide proper attribution and to also strengthen the language in the click-through instructions stating that in the future readers MAY NOT download materials for further distribution. I think this is justified since while our students may have given us permission to put things up on the Web, we didn't ask, and I don't think they had in mind giving permission for 15 or 1,500 libraries and other organizations to make copies of their theses for posting on

their sites. Unfortunately I am also considering assigning someone to go through the 4,000 plus pre-1923 **Google Book Select** entries in which the words Hong Kong appear to find full text materials for our own electronic collection. Can I forbid others to do what I want to do? What do you think we should do? Please drop me a line if you have an opinion <ferguson@hkucc.hku.hk>. 🌱

Endnotes

1. Stryker, Cheri (2001) About the new, OT group, and its FAQ. Retrieved June 2, 2008, from **UseNet Replayer**, <http://www.usenet-replayer.com/faq/alt.binaries.multimedia.xena-herc.html>.

Rumors from page 71

and information on the site, though the material created by contributors and the user community, which each member will control and be credited for, will be published alongside the encyclopedia. **Encyclopaedia Britannica** itself will continue to be edited according to the most rigorous standards and will bear the imprimatur '**Britannica Checked**' to distinguish it from material on the site for which **Britannica** editors are not responsible." See "Encyclopaedia Britannica Goes — Gasp! — Wiki," by **Josh Fischman**, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, June 6, 2008. www.chronicle.com/britannicanet.com/?p=86

Tis the season to be collaborating ... Look at our interview with the astute **Rommel Nunn** about **Crossroads** in this issue, p.56. And, another interesting development. The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) and

SPARC (Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition) have released a new series of **bookmarks** in the **Create Change** campaign, which targets scholars in different disciplines with messages about the benefits of wider research sharing. Librarians can use these freely available files to enhance their efforts to engage faculty interest in changing the way scholarly information is shared. The **Create Change Website** emphasizes the rapid and irreversible changes occurring in the ways faculty share and use academic research results. www.createchange.org www.acrl.org www.arl.org www.arl.org/sparc

Did you see the information that we posted on the **ATG News Channel** (5/13/08)? I am posting a **Rumor** most every day. Bad, bad, if you didn't!! Anyway, there was a lawsuit filed against **Georgia State University** by three publishers — **Oxford University Press**, **Cambridge University Press**, and **Sage Publications**. The publishers take issue with how **Georgia State** is handling electronic reserves. The *Chronicle of Higher*

Education interviewed **Lolly Gasaway**, **ATG's** expert on copyright, about this lawsuit which alleges that Georgia State professors infringed publishers' copyrights by "inviting students" to download, view, and print material from thousands of copyrighted works. The outcome of this lawsuit could have implications for how colleges distribute course material online.

We told you last time about **Choice's** move into new digs in late 2008 or early 2009 (**ATG**, V.20#2, p.12). Check out these photos of the construction project and see how **Irv** looks in a hard hat! www.flickr.com/photos/acrl/sets/72157604368374700/

And — last but not least — wanted to let you know that the **New England Journal of Medicine** has selected **Atypon** for its new integrated content delivery platform. There is a certain symmetry to this which is why I picked it as our last **Rumor**. **ATG** has interviews in this issue with both **Tom Richardson** of **NEJM** and **Chris Beckett** of **Atypon**. Like, cool! www.atypon.com/content.nejm.org/ www.massmed.org/ 🌱