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As I See It! -- The Future of the Printed Monograph Has Arrived

John Cox

John Cox Associates Ltd., John.E.Cox@btinternet.com

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Vendor Library Relations
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tity and quality of content currently available on a provider's platform reflects the strength of its current publisher relationships. Companies with a history of working with publishers and who understand the interests of publishers are likely to do well, since publishers are more likely to offer the best opportunities to their best, most trusted partners. One publishing friend told me that he only shares "dead books" with providers he does not know well.

Since publishers are still wary of theft, it is also necessary to look for a provider that will work with both the library community and the community of publishers to secure fair use in an environment that protects copyright. Piracy does happen; and anyone hosting eBooks that does not take that seriously will have trouble attracting and keeping publishers. If it seems the permissions promised in a sales presentation are out of line with current industry standards, be aware that the vendor may face trouble in the future with departing publishers.

It's equally important that the eBook provider's business model supports a reasonable revenue stream for publishers. Otherwise, there will be little motivation for the publisher to bother providing a digital file for that vendor's platform. Like permissions, if prices seem out of line, it could be that they are.

Libraries will also want to choose an eBook provider that regularly improves the functionality of its platform to keep up with patron expectations. An aggregator that is actively working with publishers to implement and promote new technologies will be a better long term fit than one that is acting only as a repository for content. Though it is important to choose a vendor that is shaping the digital future rather than reacting to it, it is on the other hand wise to ask questions about the technol-

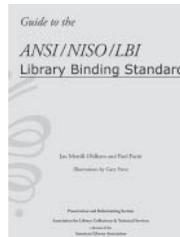
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ogy involved. Specialized formats can be an obstacle to quick acquisition and ingestion of content, leading to delays in eBook availability. The more standardized the digital file, the more likely it is to work with new technologies.

Once the questions of long-term viability, access to content, and platform development have been answered satisfactorily and weighed

appropriately, the library can then take into account cost, licensing terms, and workflow. Ease of selection and acquisition is an important factor for anything a library buys, of course — but only once the library has first made the right decisions about what it is that's being selected and acquired. 🍷



As I See It! — The Future of the Printed Monograph Has Arrived

Column Editor: **John Cox** (Managing Director, John Cox Associates Ltd, UK; Phone: +44 (0) 1327 861184; Fax: +44 (0) 20 8043 1053) <John.E.Cox@btinternet.com> www.johncoxassociates.com

In my July column I wrote about developments in technology that will affect the monograph in the future. This encompassed not only eBooks and digital printing in small quantities, but also "Distribute and Print" processes, where the publisher sends PDF files to facilities in distant markets where small quantities, or even single copies, can be printed to fill local orders.

Not many months have passed, and distribute and print has become a reality. On December 2, 2008, the OECD published *OECD Insights: Sustainable Development* by transmitting a PDF file of the book from its headquarters in Paris, France, to the Australian retail bookseller **Angus & Robertson's**

flagship shop in Bourke Street, one of the main shopping thoroughfares in Melbourne, Australia. It was immediately printed and bound as a paperback book in the shop using **On Demand Inc.'s Espresso Book Machine**. It was published simultaneously using the same process on all eleven **Espresso Book Machines** currently installed in North America, Egypt, and the UK as well as Australia.

The **Espresso Book Machine** is a digital printing machine that prints and binds a paperback book of a quality acceptable to most libraries in minutes from a digital file sent from the publisher. In 2007 it was described by *Time* magazine as one of the "Best Inventions of the Year." **On Demand Inc.** describes it as "just

in time" technology. Regardless of the public relations hooplah, this represents a major step forward with financial, customer service and environmental implications for the scholarly publishing industry.

It can be set up in retail shops such as **Angus & Robertson** or **Blackwells** — which has recently announced its installation in some of its UK shops — or in wholesalers and library booksellers such as **DA Information Services**. **DA** is **OECD's** Australian distributor, and has been responsible for bringing the technology to Australia and working with **Angus & Robertson** to make the machine available in a retail context.

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It is instructive that this innovation should not emanate from an innovative commercial publisher, but from the publishing division of an international bureaucracy. **OECD** is a treaty-based organization with 30 member states that works on the economic, social and environmental challenges of globalization. Its publishing division disseminates **OECD** research and statistics both online and in print. Its publishing has the same characteristics as many monograph publishers, whether commercial, societies or university presses: small quantities required for specialist readership.

Clearly entrepreneurial publishing development is not the sole province of the commercial sector, much though commercial publishers would like to pretend that it is. **OECD's** own online publishing has been well ahead of the field in providing tools and functionality that enables the reader to download, manipulate and visualize data. As for print, **OECD** itself is quite clear that more **OECD** books will be printed on demand locally, as distribute and print technology develops.

The benefit to the customer is clear. As soon as an order is placed, a book can be produced and supplied. No longer will US customers for books published in Europe or Asia-Pacific have to wait for stock to be shipped across the seas. The further away from the major centers of publishing the customer is — e.g., libraries in Australia, New Zealand — the greater the benefit. Books that today take two to three months to deliver if they are not in stock locally will be available within a day or two — in under three minutes if the customer is on-site.

The implications for publishers are equally striking. Distribute and print replaces the centralized book distribution supply chain, where the publisher holds stock in its warehouse and supplies its local wholesalers, retailers and library vendors, and its overseas distributors. What takes its place is a de-centralized distribution system where digital files are distributed by the publisher, but book production is undertaken locally to meet consumer or library orders as, when and where they arise. Not only does this remove shipping costs, but it also reduces the publisher's inventory — the costs of printing and holding stock — and reduces the amount of money tied up in financing that inventory. It also reduces waste by reducing the number of unsold copies held in stock that eventually have to be written off and pulped.

The financial implications for the publishing industry are huge. Not only are the direct costs of distributing physical stock reduced, but publisher's investment in inventory — the stock they hold in their warehouses waiting to be sold — can be reduced. By reducing inventory, cash is released for investing in new publishing, or reducing the publisher's bank borrowing. At the extreme, the availability of that cash can be the difference between survival and bankruptcy. It also reduces the investment barrier — the amount of money needed — to enter the publishing business, so more publishers with new ideas can enter the market.

In thinking aloud, **Toby Green, OECD's** Head of Publishing, forecasts more flexibility in publishing to meet local needs: "So, in the case of Australia we can pull together all the chapters about Australia that have appeared in our books over the past twelve months and offer them as a compilation just in that market. This has not been economically feasible before. So, alongside the launch of *Sustainable Development* we'll be launching *Australia at a Glance*." Slicing and dicing books is not new. It is well established in textbook publishing, where the major publishers all offer "custom publishing," where an instructor can select chapters from a range of different books in the publisher's list to create a book tailored exactly to his/her students' learning requirements. This may not be relevant to monographs as discrete works of scholarship, but may develop in other forms of academic and professional publishing, such as handbooks and some types of reference, as well as in disciplines where local cultures and requirements prevail.

The environmental implications are just as important. The incoming US administration has announced already that it will engage directly with the rest of the world in pursuing an environmental agenda that addresses carbon emissions and global warming. The timing is right for the publishing industry in the US and internationally to put into practice low-emission processes and prove its environmental credentials.

Many publishers, including **Harper Collins, Oxford University Press, Bloomsbury, Macmillan, Pearson Education**, etc... — are already using accredited environmentally-friendly paper. Such paper is grown in responsibly managed forests to the standards established by the **Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)** and certified (Chain of Custody certification) that the wood used comes from certified forests. The **FSC** itself was established in 1990 to set standards for responsible forest management. It accredits independent third party organizations who can certify forest managers and forest product producers to **FSC** standards. Its accreditation provides international recognition to organizations that support

responsible forest management. **FSC** paper is ethically produced with the least impact on the environment both in terms of its carbon footprint and its impact on the people, plants and wildlife of the forest (see www.fsc.org).

In 2007 the **Book Industry Study Group** and **Green Press** published a calculation that the industry emits 8.8 lbs, or nearly four kg, of carbon for every book published. And we publish 100,000 new titles each year, in quantities ranging from a few hundred to millions of copies of best sellers. Much of this carbon is generated by the removal of trees from the forest (somewhat offset by new tree planting), and to paper production and printing processes. Much is also due to unsold books, which provide no benefit to anybody, but merely consume carbon by being stored in warehouses that use energy for heating and lighting, and eventually release further carbon if and when they are pulped or incinerated. Why do publishers end up with unsold stock? One of the reasons for such wastage is that publishers have to calculate an optimum print run on the basis that the cost of printing a few more copies when the presses are already set up to go is less than that of restarting the process from scratch to reprint if sales are better than expected.

However, the supply chain itself is a significant component of the carbon footprint, dramatically increasing as the distance to the customer increases. **OECD** reckons that each copy sold in distant markets such as Australia using distribute and print will save over 12 lbs, or 5.8kg, in carbon emissions per book sold, simply by producing locally rather than air-freighting from its central warehouse. It makes no sense to print and distribute books with low print runs such as monographs centrally, when technology enables us to save money and help the planet.

So we now have a practical demonstration of a technology that saves the publisher money, improves service to customers, creates local publishing opportunities, reduces the barrier to entry into publishing, and is environmentally friendly. The wonder is why we have had to wait so long! 🌱

Random Ramblings — Introductions

Column Editor: **Bob Holley** (Professor, Library & Information Science Program, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI 48202; Phone: 313-577-4021; Fax: 313-577-7563) <aa3805@wayne.edu>

I jumped at the chance to write a column for *Against the Grain* when **Katina** asked me. Since I'm a professor of library and information science at **Wayne State University**, I get rewarded for scholarly research. I nonetheless prefer writing shorter, more practical pieces that others will perhaps use in their professional lives. I also don't like the stuffy scholarly style where I have to be "the author" instead of "I" or "me."

For this first column, I'll tell a bit about my background in collection development, my research interests, and general plans for

future columns. I had the great misfortune to graduate with a PhD in French literature from **Yale University** in 1971 — the first year of the PhD glut. I decided that I needed to earn some money to tide me over for another year of job searching and took a library assistant position at **Yale's Sterling Memorial Library** in the Catalog Department. I worked in the Science Section, Subject Cataloging Division, Catalog Department. I did copy cataloging, maintained the subject authority list, typed cross references for the public catalog, and filed cards for the

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