November 2013

ATG Interviews Dona Straley

Meris Mandernach
James Madison University, manderna@jmu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg

 Part of the Library and Information Science Commons

ATG Interviews Dona Straley

Statewide Library Depository Coordinator, OhioLINK

by **Meris Mandernach** (Collection Management Librarian, James Madison University) <manderma@jmu.edu>

ATG: Dona, in the past year you started in the position as the Statewide Library Depository Coordinator. Tell us about it.

DS: I am now halfway through a two-year appointment to look at the depositories' collections and services, to begin a de-duplication process, and to make recommendations on other aspects such as preservation of the physical collections and additional services that might be offered.

ATG: What is the state of the depository system in Ohio? How have depositories in the state worked in the past? How would the state like to see them work in the future?

DS: There are five state-supported depositories in Ohio which were initially funded by the state legislature to relieve crowded conditions in the state university libraries; these depositories were regionally located and controlled by the institutions that contributed materials to them. In the past few years, we have come to understand that the depositories could be an even greater resource for **OhioLINK** if they work together as one system rather than as five separate facilities, and if we maximize the space in them by looking at the number of duplicated titles across all five.

ATG: What is the single greatest challenge in the coordination of the depositories around the state?

DS: Undoubtedly, it's reaching consensus among the many institutions on a wide variety of topics: how many copies of titles should be maintained in the depositories? What is the relationship between the depositories and the contributing institutions? How are statistics counted by contributing institutions? There are literally dozens of such questions that we have been, and continue to discuss.

In addition, we also have to deal with the limitations of high density depository buildings. Such facilities are great for storing materials, but they're not very efficient for retrieval, and they are extremely inefficient when we start thinking about withdrawing duplicated titles and having to find a way to fill in those empty spaces.

ATG: You mentioned coordinated collection development across the state of Ohio. What measures are currently in place?

DS: A number of **OhioLINK** institutions participate in the **Yankee Book Peddler** approval plan, which provides information on the status of each title at **OhioLINK** institutions. The "Not Bought in Ohio" project also uses the **YBP** database, allowing selectors to run reports on titles in specific subject areas that have not been purchased by an **OhioLINK** institution. In coordination with **OCLC**, a series of reports examining **OhioLINK** collections in depth are giving librarians an unprecedented chance to see data on individual institutions and on the consortium as a whole, to discover what subject areas are collected at what levels. Nearly from the beginning of **OhioLINK**, there have been subject groups made up of all interested librarians from throughout **OhioLINK** who exchange information on subject-specific resources; some of these groups have coordinated actual collection development among their institutions.

ATG: What impact do you anticipate that Google Books will have on requests for materials in off-site storage?

DS: For out-of-copyright materials, it's possible that the number of requests might go down, although there are enough problems with the quality of digitization that people will still need to see the physical item or need a scan of an article from the original. But for in-copyright materials, it could very easily lead to an increase in requests, as people using **Google Books** discover content from keyword searching in the full text of books and journals.

ATG: How do you think off-site storage will work in the future? Will the trend to more electronic materials negate the need for off-site print storage?

DS: We will always need off-site print storage, but perhaps not for exactly the same things that are housed there today. As regional and national cooperative projects are discussed and implemented, we probably won't be keeping as many copies of a single title in one facility or one system. But our special collections and archival collections will continue to grow and will probably take up an increasing amount of space in our off-site facilities.

ATG: Tell us about yourself. Where are you from originally? What do you like to do? Read? Anything you want to tell us?

DS: I was born in Ohio and raised on a farm and in a very small town in south central Ohio. I received my BA in history from **Ohio State**, a PhD in Arabic & Islamic Studies from the **University of Edinburgh** in Scotland, and my MLS from **Indiana University**.

I like to garden (with varying success), knit, read, work puzzles, and cheer on the **Columbus Blue Jackets**. Also, my friend (and Charleston regular) **Heidi Hoerman** and I travel to birdwatch, look at wildflowers, and generally enjoy less-congested parts of the US.

ATG: A faculty colleague of mine remarked that academic e-journals and eBooks were one way or another pdf platforms. I was about to argue when it dawned on me he had a point. We run predictable technology. Can we do more? Should we?

AO: There are lots of PDF's out there, but I think your colleague is too pessimistic. There are more and more publications using non-fixed formats, interactive, media. It's inevitable there will be many more and better. And PDF, remember, is a clunky, unusable format for handhelds and even cute little netbooks. Give it 20 years and we'll remember PDF the way we remember 5 ¼ inch floppy disks.

ATG: We just passed the 20th anniversary of F.W. Lancaster's article in College and Research Libraries where he speculated on the future of librarianship and libraries. Lancaster predicted that electronic communication systems would end print publishing as we know it and bring the end to traditional libraries. Whither or wither libraries. Take us out with your take on Lancaster's bold prediction.

AO: Lancaster was right in predicting that e-systems would bring tremendous changes. He may not have been right about the print piece of things (that print would end and thus would end the role of libraries), because the consequences are proving much more nuanced, dramatic, "unintended," and far reaching. Print will still be with us as one favored format, but there will be whole orders of magnitude more information, in a host of new formats besides.

New technologies give new opportunities to libraries, opportunities that we are beginning to seize. Librarians are becoming more in touch with users and less preoccupied with the exact types of objects we collect. These are very exciting times to be in our profession. The other day, I was describing to one of my medical specialists an international digital library project we at **Yale** are working on and also an upcoming **UN** project meeting. He said, "Sounds like I should have been a librarian instead — compared to you all, we're like wallpaper." I meet people on planes who can't stop talking about **Google** settlements, online information, rare maps, how great their public library is, and asking me what I think about these things, as they get out their **Kindles** to read books — instead of watching the airline movie. Who would have thought it?!