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As I See It! -- Emerging Trends in Textbooks -- Libraries Will Feel the Effect

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so routinely involved in the new technology of computers that he put himself to sleep at night producing wiring board models of possible computer circuits. In addition, he was a passionate organ player. Much of our conversation was devoted to these matters, making this perhaps the easiest "cold call" I had made.

These were my first, self-initiated passes at selling sci-tech books, and I concluded this trip once again gravely uncertain about the outcome. In all three cases the usual trial orders began to appear, and we worked very diligently to make sure these trial orders presented **RCB** in the best light possible. Within several months, incoming orders came from established accounts. These new accounts confirmed that **RCB** had been accepted as a reliable dealer in scientific books as well as the accustomed scholarly humanities and social science books.

The volume of business was outstripping the capacities of the three of us and our part-time student help. Therefore, the first assay into hiring employees outside the confines of the **Reed College** student body was undertaken. This assay proved more rewarding than anticipated, for we located **Lorene Dortch**, who became a backroom pillar of **RCB** for years. **Lorene** was a former jazz singer mar-

ried to a jazz drummer whose mounting health problems forced her to seek steadier employment. She was first brought aboard to assist with billing and order processing. She then went on to hire and organize a staff to conduct the ordering and receiving operations, a staff which consisted of mothers reentering the job market after their children had grown. In the early days **Lorene** was also soon overwhelmed, so she brought aboard **Eunice Andrews**, who ultimately married **Tom Martin**.

It appeared that everything had fallen comfortably into place, and **RCB** had a "calm sea and pleasant voyage" ahead. We had discovered a book-supply niche, which all the competing booksellers treated as more or less peripheral to their most profitable and readily serviced book customers and demands. There seemed to be little difficult competition, as **American News** had fallen on hard times, a victim of burgeoning growth following the founding of a growing number of independent news dealers. (**American News** eventually went bankrupt.) I encountered no **Baker & Taylor** representatives in the academic libraries — the few on the road seemed to focus on the public libraries and large school districts. We had ample space for inventory and staff. We had the fundamental nucleus of a first-class staff, to which further supplemental staff could be readily added.

We had finally drawn the attention and cooperation of the scholarly and scientific publishers across North America simply by

virtue of our rapidly increasing purchases and our salesmen's reports. I had not yet gone to publishing centers, but a number of publishers came out to size up this maverick operation. **Mildred Smith**, editor of *Publisher's Weekly (PW)*, which was the sole U.S. book trade publication of that era, came out to have a look. **Mildred** was a redoubtable eminence in the book trade, another no-nonsense but acute individual. From that visit forward, we enjoyed a cordial relationship with *PW* and eventually with **Daniel (Dan) Melcher**, the President of **Bowker**.

Thus, we possessed substantial relationships with not only publishers' representatives but the heads of a number of firms and the media. I was asked to speak at an early **American Association of University Presses (AAUP)** meeting. As a result, I received job offers from three of the major university presses, but I turned them all down. I was firmly and irrevocably committed to running a small, maverick scholarly and scientific bookselling operation, oriented to scholarly and research libraries from a college campus. We had a growing base of academic and research libraries that seemed to value our single-minded devotion to serving them, and we eschewed all options to enter into other species of books and libraries or other classes of library furniture and goods. It all seemed a clear and pleasant voyage in association with people whose vocation and company we respected and enjoyed. 🌿

As I See It! — Emerging Trends in Textbooks — Libraries Will Feel the Effect

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Some remarks made to a **Publishers Association** conference in the UK by **Tom Davy**, CEO of **Cengage Learning Europe, Middle-East & Africa**, about textbooks made me sit up. He is an experienced and thoughtful publisher who does not hesitate to look beyond the smoke of today's battle to the unexplored territory beyond.

Davy told his fellow publishers that the textbook market is in decline, and that textbook publishers have to look beyond the printed book (*The Bookseller*, 15 February 2008), and use technology not merely to deliver content but to provide learning solutions that extend well beyond the remit of the traditional textbook. This writer's publishing career started in college textbook publishing, so his remarks stimulated some thought about the changes that are going on right now.

Traditionally, print-based textbook publishing is characterised by the adoption of the textbook that is purchased by each student for the course. The textbook has generally been accompanied by the provision, free of charge,

of material to assist teachers in the effective use of the textbook to drive learning results: the instructor's manual. It was this way for many years until the Internet disrupted the way we did things.

Turbulent times have hit textbook publishing. The top five major English-language textbook publishers in the world are **Pearson Education, Cengage Learning, McGraw-Hill, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt and Macmillan** (including **Bedford Freeman Worth**). Incidentally, the top five textbook publishers in the USA are the same five companies. But **Reed Elsevier, Thomson and Wolters Kluwer** have all sold off their textbook businesses. Why? What **Tom**

Davy described as a market of diminishing returns is the reason:

- The textbook market is very competitive. Success is difficult to achieve. Each of these companies has other, more profitable activities in professional and financial information services. Indeed, in late February **Reed Elsevier** announced that

it was selling its magazine publishing business, **Reed Business Information**; **Reed** not only wants to get out of textbooks, it is getting out of all print-based or advertising-driven publishing.

- In the past ten years, second-hand copy sales and the increasing use of Web-based information have had a devastating effect on college textbook sales.
- Internet delivery of lecture notes and presentations, and **Google** searches for answers, threaten to destroy adopted textbook multiple copy sales as the engine of the business. It is very difficult to see how textbook adoptions can be maintained in the online environment.
- The investment in technology to support a new generation of textbook-based products, with critically enhanced functionality to manage workflows and provide a complete learning environment, is so large that only the largest companies can assume the investment and manage the risk inherent in product innovation and re-engineering.

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The Internet has driven publishers to replace the instructor's manual by a variety of online resources, the scope of which has broadened relentlessly. It is now common to see:

- Websites to support the instructor: not only "tips for tired teachers", but also animations, images, podcasts and **Pow-erPoint** presentations.
- Interactive features such as visualisation tools, online homework, self-assessment and testing, and video-conferencing.
- Links to third party resources to provide seamless access to a wide range of supporting information, such as the links **Cengage Learning** has built from its textbook sites to the **Gale** databases.
- Custom publishing to enable an instructor to "slice and dice" available textbook content to create a textbook dedicated to the instructor's course, e.g. **McGraw-Hill's PRIMIS** service.
- Links with learning management tools and **Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs)**. Many publishers have agreements with **Blackboard** to provide e-textbook components via the **Blackboard** platform.
- The larger publishers have invested heavily in assessment and testing products to support teaching by providing the tools to measure learning achievement. **Pearson's** investment in such products includes its acquisition of **National Computer Services** and **National Evaluation Systems** in the USA, and **Edexcel**, the UK's largest examining body.

The use of non-print media to support learning is not new. An early pioneer in multi-media instruction is **The Open University (OU)**. It is the UK's only university dedicated to distance learning, with 150,000 undergraduate and 30,000 postgraduate students, of which 25,000 students live outside the UK. Thirty five years ago **OU** teaching material comprised textbooks and printed course material, radio and television. Today, the **OU** has largely replaced its textbooks, printed course material, radio and television with a Web-based platform that delivers all the services students working on their own really need. The **OU Library** provides 2.5 million page views a year, and 110,000 students use its conferencing system.

The direction this is going is clear. Instructor support is being extended by the provision of workflow tools that integrate all of these features into a single environment. **Wiley** has done precisely this by launching **WileyPLUS**.

It is not just a one-way street. Publishers are not the only, or even the most important innovators. The use of learning management tools such as **Blackboard** or **VLEs** is familiar. Much of this development has originated within universities and colleges, or commercial training or software companies such as **eCol-**

lege (now part of **Pearson**), **emantras Inc.**, and **Angel Learning**.

Web 2.0 is also making itself felt. **Web 2.0** technologies can help develop resources collaboratively authored by the instructor and students. **MySpace** and "**e-portfolio**" systems are emerging: **Allegheny College** in Pennsylvania is using a **MySpace** page to create a sense of community among students and to provide a repository for fixed information such as student records and information entered by the student, such as comments on classes, learning experiences etc... (For a really interesting description of such innovation in UK universities, see *Information World Review* May 2007: www.iwr.co.uk/2189465). **BioMed Central (BMC)** has launched a **YouTube** channel (www.youtube.com/BioMedCentral) on which research authors are encouraged to upload video discussing their work. It clearly believes that it can use social networking sites to enhance research as well as teaching.

Dancing around the margins of the textbook market are sites that offer free textbooks online. At present, they are relatively small, but their development represents a potential threat to the major textbook publishers. The idea that educational information should be free is a powerful one. These sites tend to be of two types: sites that host books and provide free downloads, and sites that provide authors with the facility to upload their own works for free online distribution. But they need financial support to pay their way. One of the business models being explored is one based on advertising and sponsorship. This, of course, is not grounded in reality; it

ignores the fact that advertisers do not want to pay to advertise to small audiences that have little money, such as students. Moreover, the long-term sustainability of volunteer-operated or advertising-supported business models is open to question. The quality of such content is compromised by a lack of the review and quality control processes that publishers routinely operate. In many cases it is little more than vanity publishing.

So what has this to do with libraries? Libraries are being brought into teaching by the side door. They provide, free at the point of use, a range of information for undergraduate use: eBooks, e-journals and aggregated databases. They are already involved in the implementation of learning management systems and **VLEs**. While in the USA course packs have often been handled by local college bookstores, in other countries like the UK, the library has cleared the rights and made printed course packs available to students. It is but a small step to expect libraries to supply textbook content. Students that are expected to pay large sums of money in tuition fees believe that they are entitled to the provision of all content for their courses. They increasingly behave like consumers.

In the past few years, many librarians have worried about the future of the library in an online environment. But libraries are at the fulcrum of information provision in the institution. It is a transformational role. Librarians are at the center of undergraduate teaching and learning. All it needs is for the case to be made to the institution, and the budgets to make it possible. 🌸

Case Studies in Collection and Technical Services

Case Study Eight: The Search Committee — So Many Resumes, How do I do My Part?

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Steve and **Heather** were chatting in the elevator on their way to a committee meeting. They discovered that they were both concerned. **Steve**, as a collection development librarian in his second year of work, had never served on a search committee before. He really didn't know what to do, or what was expected of someone on a search committee. **Heather** had a different problem. It had been years since she had been asked to serve on a search committee, and she knew that things had changed in the intervening years, and that she had a lot to catch up on. This was a search that was important to both of them — the person hired would be their new supervisor — and they wanted to be sure they knew what their responsibilities were and that they helped the library pick the

right person. They also wanted to figure out some organized way to sort through all of the applications that filled the full file folder in the human resources office. What to do?

The Experts Speak:

First, it is good to remember that often the institutions libraries are a part of have specific policies on how to run searches for open positions, as well, library organizations have their own policies or guidelines on how searches for especially open professional positions ought to proceed.

Steve and **Heather** will want to familiarize themselves with the various guidelines or policies as they apply to their own institution.

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