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I Hear the Train A Comin' -- The Rise of China

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60 percent admitting to copying the work of other scholars (see Paul Mooney’s “Plagued by Plagiarism” in The Chronicle for Higher Education for more on this topic). Whether the changes vowed by Peking University administrators and other Chinese academic officials — including threats of firing and the creation of a master database of plagiarism charges — adequately address the international audience’s wariness of Chinese scholarship will take some time to assess.

How will the scholarly communication adapt to the Chinese influence? What will the composition of academic content creators and consumers look like in a decade’s time? How will standards and expectations change in the face of a more diverse author base? These are fascinating questions I hope to revisit in these pages frequently. I am certain I am not the only one with a vested interest in how this all plays out.

**Sparta Public Library** is certainly in the spotlight as a result of this innovative (and potentially legally inflammatory) move. Lapsley says she has been interviewed by both American Libraries and the New York Times in the last month, not to mention the two already published write-ups in Library Journal. I checked back with Lapsley at the end of March; despite all of the press, she says she has not heard a thing from Amazon to date, and she prefers it that way. As Francine Fialkoff, Editor-in-Chief of LJ, recently pointed out in an editorial in the March 1, 2008 issue, “[I]f Amazon is smart, Sparta won’t [hear from them].” Fialkoff goes on to explain, “As lenders of hardware and software, including downloadable audiobooks and ebooks and their various players, libraries help promote the very companies that would prevent these same libraries from disseminating their products.”

If you are not prepared to flout Amazon and their attorneys, there may be applications for the Kindle within a library setting without actually circulating the device or the content. In the Winter 2008 issue of netConnect, Christopher Harris floats the idea of a librarian offering roaming reference services equipped with a Kindle, which already includes a dictionary and access to Wikipedia and could be loaded with additional reference resources from the Kindle store.

**Rumors**

**Alert**

**Note from the Author:** My thanks to Diane Lapsley of Sparta Public Library. I would be interested in hearing a publisher’s perspective on Kindle and their applications in libraries. If you are a publisher whose content is available for download to the Kindle, and you would be willing to be interviewed for a future issue of Against the Grain, please contact me, <cris.ferguson@fiurman.edu>.

**References**


In his featured presentation at last November’s Charleston Conference, Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers (ALPSP) Chief Executive Ian Russell spoke persuasively about the “next big thing” in scholarly communication. In Ian’s mind, the rise of China as both a consumer and producer of research would profoundly influence the space in the decade to come. Given the tight 20 minute allotment the Charleston forum provided, it was difficult to delve into this provocative prognostication in substantive detail. The rise of China, a popular topic sure to be ubiquitous as the Beijing Olympic Games approach this summer, is a fascinating subject that deserves a bit more attention in the scholarly communication space.

Let’s start with the basic facts as they pertain to China. The Chinese population exceeds 1.3 billion, more than 20% of the world’s total. Its economy has averaged 9.5% growth for each of the last 20 years. It has more than 2,000 universities and six million enrolled higher education students. (Of less relevance here but still interesting for anyone writing a book report, ice cream was invented in China 4,000 years ago, it borders 14 other countries, and it produces more cotton than any other nation in the world.)

Where these statistics start to gain relevance to this discussion are in the trend lines. China’s GDP investment in research and development will grow from around 1% earlier of China as a Leading Nation in Science ment in China has increased more than five-fold since 1996.