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Biz of Acq-Increasing Your Efficiency with Internet Resources

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Against the Grain

"Linking Publishers, Vendors and Librarians"

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Biz of Acq — Increasing Your Efficiency with Internet Resources

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Column editor's note: I should begin by justly thanking Jack Montgomery, long-time editor of this column, for inviting me to edit. I have learned a great deal from Jack — as have we all! — and I feel very honored to "receive this baton" from him.

Electronic tools — both local applications and networked resources — now allow ac-

quisitions librarians and staff to conduct business with unprecedented efficiency. Rob Withers, Systems/Technical Services Librarian at Western Maryland College, describes the fine array of digital resources he and his staff have assembled to improve workflow and save time and funds. — R.R.

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If Rumors Were Horses

Okay, y'all. You know, it's hard to believe that SO MUCH keeps happening in our little ole world! But here you have it.

First and foremost, **Carl Teresa** (used to be General Manager, **Ballen Booksellers International** and more recently has been General Manager at **Informatica**) has a new job! Carl has been appointed General Manager of **EBSCO's** Tenafly, NJ, office. Carl we are all so excited that we will be seeing more of you. Congrats and see you soon!

Chuck Hamaker is the new Head of Technical Services at **UNC-Charlotte**, effective January 19, 1998. Congrats, Chuck!!

Let's see. The **M.A.I.D.** purchase of **KRII** has gone through as of November 14, but

UnCover and **CARL** are probably going to be resold. In the meantime, on Friday, November 21, the **Dialog Corporation PLC**, the new market online information industry company created by the merger of **M.A.I.D., PLC** and **Knight-Ridder Information Inc.** (**KRII**) announced that the first stage of the integration of businesses had been implemented. The combined workforce of the two companies has been reduced by 24% to 1,060. "From the outset of our discussions, it was clear that there would be a reduction in the combined workforce as **KRII's** personnel growth had outpaced that of both revenue and profits in the past two years. It was also apparent that the elimination of duplicate functions would have to be addressed," said **Dan Wagner**, Chief Executive of **The Dialog Corporation**. It appears that 19 people have been let go at **CARL** but none at **UnCover**.

Prior to this, the hard-charging **Martha Whittaker** resigned at **CARL**. She is doing fabulously on several consulting jobs and we will interview her in a future issue!

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Several years ago, as a paraprofessional working on "problem" orders, I discovered that I could often find information and communicate with others more quickly by using electronic resources than by running across the building to use the fax, photocopier, reference collection, etc.. When used creatively, Internet resources can speed up the process of finding information about the materials we order and communicating information with selectors, acquisitions personnel, and vendors. Internet resources can help us to streamline the following aspects of acquisitions workflow: Communicating with Vendors and Selectors; Finding Information; Organizing Information; Disseminating Information.

Communicating with Vendors/Selectors

In the olden days of the early 1990s, notes to vendors or selectors would be hand-written (due to a shortage of computers). The resulting note would then be mailed or faxed — but not before being photocopied; the photocopies were filed by date so that they would be handy if the recipient (a) did not receive the note, (b) did not respond to the note within an allotted period of time, or (c) lost the note before they could respond.

Fortunately, email allows several ways of streamlining this process by eliminating the need to trek to the nearest photocopier, fax machine, or mail drop. Most email packages automatically store sent messages in chronological order, eliminating the need for copying and filing. In addition, email offers the possibility of creating "form letters" to deal with commonly occurring situations, such as price increases, notification of publication delays, cancellations, or claims. The "form letter" will contain a sentence or two explaining the situation ("The book which you had requested will not be available until"), several labeled fields where pertinent information (title of book, new publication date, price, etc.) can be filled in, and a closing sentence ("Please indicate by next week if you wish to cancel"). Using the Pine email package, this is done by creating documents in the user's root account; using other POP email products such as **Netscape** or **Eudora**, this is accomplished by creating form letters in a word processor and then copying them into an email message. Tracking down email addresses for publishers/vendors is no problem thanks to **AcqWeb's** handy directory.¹ Users of most email packages can add frequently-used addresses to their address books; users of **Netscape's** email program can simply look up the publisher, click on the email address listed for the publisher, paste in a form letter, fill in the needed information, and send the message.

Finding Information

Information resources accessible on the World Wide Web sometimes spare us a jog to the reference room, and sometimes (particularly at institutions with smaller collections) enable us to locate information which might otherwise be unavailable. One way in which they do so is by providing more up-to-date information about price, availability and bibliographic information for in- and out-of-print works than is available in print resources. Several resources are helpful for in-print materials. While not free, *Books in Print* is commercially available and widely used for locating information on domestically-available materials. It may be supplemented by proprietary vendor catalogs, or even publishers' catalogs (when the publisher is known).² On several occasions, online publishers' catalogs have proved invaluable for locating new editions of books when *Books in Print* and vendor databases

have failed. Materials from Western Europe may be tracked down by publishers' catalogs if the publisher is known; when this is not the case, *Livres Disponibles*,³ *VLB*⁴ or *Abiszet Bucherservice GmbH*,⁵ and *PIC*⁶ can track down French, German, and Spanish imprints, respectively.

Online publishers' catalogs are perhaps the most under-rated of these sources. Last month, we were able to find a listing for a new edition of a particular book on the publisher's Web page, but not on **OCLC**, *Books in Print*, or two of our vendors' databases. On several occasions, we have looked for and found bibliographic information on a publisher's Web page after being unable to obtain this information by phone from that publisher's customer support division. And Web pages, unlike people, don't go home for the evening or take holidays. Several options are available for those seeking price or availability of books no longer in print. *Books Out of Print*,⁷ which requires a free registration, may be helpful for locating remaindered copies. Older materials may be located on the **American Antiquarian Booksellers Association** Web site,⁸ which will search dealer catalogs, indicate which dealer has (or had) the book, and connect you to their Web site. A recent *U.S. News and World Report* article mentions success people have had locating books with several online search services such as **Bibliofind**, **Interloc**, and **Advanced Book Exchange**.⁹ Just last week, one of my staff members managed to locate a book reported unavailable by our primary vendors in **Amazon.com's** database¹⁰ and is currently making arrangements to order it. Bibliographic information for books not found in **OCLC** may be tracked down with many of the resources listed above. An excellent source of information about films is the **Internet Movie Database**, which is a life-saver when one is presented with sketchy information about a film ("The word Priscilla was in the title and I think it starred ..."). The Internet Movie Database provides searching by title, actors, directors, producers, etc., and provides information on film adaptation of books, re-makes of earlier films, or spoofs of earlier films.¹¹

In addition to locating information on price or availability, World Wide Web resources can be used to track down difficult-to-find contact information. While not free, **Pro CD Home** and **Pro CD Biz** directories available via **FirstSearch** are useful if you have access to them. If not, free phone directories, such as **Switchboard**¹² and **Four-1-1**,¹³ allow acquisitions staff to quickly track down contact information for companies and individuals without resorting to **PhoneFiche** or **ProPhone**. Contact information for scholarly organizations can be particularly problematic, since officers to whom purchase requests must be sent may change from one year to the next, and availability of festschriften or other publications may be difficult to ascertain from traditional sources. Fortunately, the **Scholarly Societies Project**¹⁴ provides links to the Web sites of many scholarly organizations; while quality of the sites varies, most will provide you with contact information, and some will also have catalogs of forthcoming/in-print materials.

Organizing Information

Resources like the ones mentioned above can be located and used more quickly if users don't have to keep a list of URLs at their side in order to use them. Although **AcqWeb**¹⁵ provides a nearly exhaustive collection of links to acquisitions-related resources, it has several drawbacks: firstly, the amount of information can overwhelm novices; secondly, because of the amount of information, it can be time-consuming to jump from one page to another looking for heavily used resources; and thirdly, local users can't customize resources by deleting less-frequently-used resources and adding local resources. Creating a Web page gives you the ability to include sites which are most useful and organize them in the way that is most useful to you and your staff. Sadly, many people fail to develop pages because they wrongly

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assume that Web authoring requires programming ability or special training. However, HTML editors simplify the task of creating Web documents because they are in most respects similar to word processors. If you have learned how to use a word processor, you should have little difficulty with editors such as **Netscape Gold**, **Microsoft Front Page** and **Claris Home Page**.¹⁶ While finding or creating glitzy graphics requires a greater investment of time and commitment to learning, creating a simple, effective, and reasonably attractive resource can be done quickly.

Disseminating Information

Trying to keep a large number of people supplied with up-to-date memos, tutorials, and lists of codes can be a frustrating task, especially in large departments. Some people may be able to find only an outdated version of the handout; find the handout, but not know for certain if it is the most up-to-date, or worse yet, find two different, undated versions, with no way of ascertaining which one is the most current. Losing or misplacing the handout is also a problem. In such instances, one must contact the person who keeps the hard copies of the handouts or has them on disk and request a new copy — if that person is available.

Several years ago, my department head and I decided to convert our tutorials, code lists, and policies from print into HTML documents. Our hopes were that: (1) department members could always find the information online if they lost the hardcopy when they needed it, rather than when the secretary or I were available, and (2) department members could always be confident that the information was up-to-date,

because the copy available from the World Wide Web would always be the most current. Our concern was that people would not feel comfortable either reading or printing this information from the World Wide Web. This concern turned out to be unfounded, however; people who worked on computers appreciated the ability to switch from using an application to a tutorial or FAQ about that application. In addition, several staff members who felt the need to develop new skills periodically printed out tutorials on applications with which they were not familiar.

Converting documents into HTML can be incredibly easy or frustratingly difficult, depending on how much time you have and what kind of software you are using. **Microsoft Word '97** users and **Corel WordPerfect 8** users are fortunate, since they can create Web documents simply by saving word processing documents as HTML; although documents which have been converted into HTML will require some minor tweaking, the program takes care of most of the work. If all else fails, you can copy and paste from your word processor into an HTML editor, although you'll have to redo much of the formatting.

Conclusion

By creatively using email and the World Wide Web, we can often improve the speed with which we and our staff find and communicate information needed for day-to-day tasks. Employees fortunate enough to have a computer can often access Internet resources from their desktops, whereas the print, microform, or CD-ROM resources may require a walk across the workroom or the library. In an age of shrinking budgets and staff, the time- and labor cost-savings that can come with using networked resources, are too valuable to pass up.

Sources

1. **AcqWeb International Directory of Email Addresses of Publishers, Vendors, etc.** <<http://www.library.vanderbilt.edu/law/acqs/email-ad.html>>.
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3. **Page sommaire de l'application Alapage.** <<http://www.alapage.tm.fr/>>.
4. **Homepage Databanken.** <http://www.buchhandel.de/cgi-bin/bksuche.exe?opacdb=GBM+DBSelect&a_start1=Datenbanken&maske1=dbselect&uid=#PARAM.CGLUID#>.
5. **Buchhandlung abiszet Bucherservice GmbH.** <<http://www.a-zet.de/>>.
6. **Puntos de Información Cultural.** <<http://canari.step.es/inforjoen/cultura/pic.htm>>.
7. **Books Out of Print.** <<http://www.reedref.com/boop.html>>.
8. **American Antiquarian Booksellers Association.** <<http://www.clark.net/pub/rmharris/booknet1.html>>.
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10. **Amazon.com: Earth's Biggest Bookstore.** <<http://www.amazon.com/>>.
11. **Internet Movie Database Search.** <<http://us.imdb.com/search>>.
12. **Switchboard Home Page.** <<http://www.switchboard.com/>>.
13. **Four11 Directory Services.** <<http://www.four11.com/>>.
14. **Webpages & Gophers of Scholarly Societies.** <<http://www.lib.uwaterloo.ca/society/webpages.html>>.
15. **AcqWeb.** <<http://www.library.vanderbilt.edu/law/acqs/acqs.html>>.
16. Several sites provide reviews of HTML editors and instructions for downloading or ordering the software. Among them: **TUCOWS** has several listings for **Windows 95 HTML editors** <<http://tucows.phoenix.net/window95.html>> and for **Macintosh HTML editors** <<http://tucows.phoenix.net/mac/htmleditmac.html>>. **Stroud's** provides ordering information and ratings for **Windows 95 editors** <<http://www.midwest.net/softwarecwsapps95.html>>. **Carl Davis** provides ranking information and feature-by-feature comparisons <<http://homepage.interaccess.com/~cdavis/editrev/index.html>>. **Mag's Big List of HTML Editors for Amiga, DOS, Mac, NeXTstep, OS/2, Unix, VMS, and Windows** <<http://www.hypernews.org/HyperNews/get/www/html/editors.html>>.

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duction. We at the U.S. ISSN center are trying to spread the word about the ISSN policy but given the rapidly evolving state of online publishing it will continue to be a challenge for us." And do you remember the article that Regina wrote for *ATG*? If you didn't read it then (shame on you!), you might want to check out the article that Regina wrote about ISSN (it's 25 years old) in *ATG*, v.8#3, June 1996, pp.26, 28, 31, "ISSN: It's Still Some Number."

Bryce Carlen <brycec@photodisc.com> tells us that the Secret Service has a number of FAQ pages on illustrations /

reproductions of currency. The following URL is a good starting point: <<http://www.ustreas.gov/treasury/bureaus/ussf/money/illcurr.htm>>

Nature and the **Institute for Scientific Information** have announced forthcoming links between the Web content of the weekly journal and the **ISI Web of Science**. These links will be available upon introduction of *Nature's* new online service for subscribers. Founded in 1869, *Nature* has the highest impact factor of any journal of its type in immunology, physics, chemistry, astrophysics and space sciences, and earth sciences. *Nature* publishes multidisciplinary research papers that have undergone rigorous peer review. In addition, the journal offers expert analy-

sis, a global news report, scientific correspondence, and book reviews. For more information visit their Web site at <<http://www.nature.com>>.

William J. Studer (Director of Libraries. The Ohio State University) <studer.2@osu.edu> has appointed **Carol Diedrichs** Interim Assistant Director for Technical Services, effective October 27. At her own request, she will retain her responsibility as Head of Acquisitions. Congratulations, Carol!

Mark Capaldini has joined **Congressional Information Service, Inc.**, and its imprint **University Publications of America** as President and CEO. Capaldini came to CIS from **LEGI-SLATE, Inc.**,

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