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Call for Papers-Annual Report Issue

Editor

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Call For Papers

Against the Grain — Annual Report Issue — February, 1998



For the second year in a row, *Against the Grain* will publish a ****sixth issue**** — v.9 #6, February 1998. This sixth issue of *Against the Grain* will be called the **Annual Report Issue**. In it, we will cover events, trends, and issues which impacted our industry in 1997 and discuss what will be the trends of 1998. Here is a chance for library, vendor, and publishing professionals to observe, take stock, and look forward to the future.

The focus of the sixth issue will be on the year's work. We need writers to provide their own recapitulations of 1997. We need viewpoints from publishers, book jobbers, subscription agents, librarians,

consultants, retired persons, any of us in the ever-expanding information industry. What were the issues of 1997? What were the trends? What conferences did you attend and what did you learn from them, about them? Which of our colleagues have contributed to our world, making it better, more provocative, happier?

Once again, **Tom Leonhardt** has agreed to edit the sixth issue of *Against the Grain* — but we all need your help. Ideas, submissions, whatever should be sent to Tom at (Oregon Institute of Technology) <tleonhardt@oit.edu>. Or you can even send them to Katina <strauchk@cofc.edu>; fax (803-723-

3536), USPS: 209 Richardson Dr., MSC98, The Citadel, Charleston, SC 29409. We hope our usual columnists will provide material, preferably with this 1997 wrap-up spin on the text, but the main thing is to submit something. For those of you who have been quiet, now's your time to speak up! And remember — Writing is a great exercise. Studies show that using our brains actually causes them to grow. And remember, publishers and editors may add value to a publication, but the intrinsic worth of any magazine comes from the writers. **Please contribute no matter how much you may have given at the office.** Thank you. 🌻

Outsourcing in American Libraries from page 18

tor.[19] This movement toward privatization included federal libraries, which were defined as a commercial activity in Circular A-76 issued by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget. As a result a number of federal libraries were outsourced to private companies. The library profession strongly opposed this practice, arguing that libraries are not products that can be purchased off-the-shelf.[20] After years of experimentation and some major failures, this movement fizzled out because privatization costs became higher than anticipated.

The Mechanics

No two academic libraries are alike and outsourcing reflects this diversity. Different libraries may choose different outsourcing strategies to suit their specific situation. Vendor services reflect this diversity as they try to satisfy individual libraries' needs. However, all libraries have to ask themselves the same questions before embarking on an outsourcing project. By following a carefully constructed plan, an organization increases the chances that its outsourcing operation is successful. There are three clear phases to outsourcing: planning, implementing, and managing. Libraries will need to devote a lot of time and energy during each phase of the process.

Planning, by far the most time-consuming phase, has several distinct phases. The library has to examine and cost out internal workflows and operations. This phase is difficult to achieve as there are few studies that give ready-made answers. The library has to go through a painstaking process in order to gather its data. Once the decision is made to outsource, the library has to prepare an RFP and go

out for bid. Choosing a vendor is another daunting task and so is negotiating the contract. None of the steps should be skipped since they are each vital to a successful outsourcing venture.

Once the vendor has been hired, the implementation phase starts. This phase is the most disruptive stage as the library has to rearrange workflows, introduce new routines, develop new policies, learn how to use new systems, and integrate its work with that of the vendor. Implementation can be really intense, but should not last long.

The third stage, managing, is an ongoing process and consists of quality control and troubleshooting. Experts advise that in order for an outsourcing venture to function properly, the library needs to refrain from micromanaging the project, the quality checking has to be done selectively, and in general, there has to be a high level of trust between the two parties.

At all three levels, there needs to be a project manager in charge and the library administration has to be fully supportive of the operation. During all phases, it is imperative to keep the lines of communication between the administration and the employees open. Otherwise, vested interests in the library that may oppose outsourcing could cause the endeavor to fail,

Conclusion

Outsourcing is neither good nor bad. It is only a tool that libraries can use to improve their operations. The library's specific circumstances, and the manner in which outsourcing is implemented are the main factors that will determine success or failure. Regardless of how librarians feel about outsourcing, they should keep an open mind. Budget crises will not go away, and libraries need to keep track of all the alternatives at their disposal. 🌻

Rumors from page 14

deter illegal activity than banning the manufacture of valuable devices with multiple purposes, such as personal computers or the next generation of video recorders. (Librarians and educators must have access to such devices to actually take advantage of fair use or other privileges afforded them under the Copyright Act.)" **Robert Oakley**, director of the Law Library at **Georgetown University Law Center**, said he was pleased with the introduction of Sen. Ashcroft's bill, which deals with many copyright issues currently facing the library community. **Oakley**—who testified at a recent congressional hearing on online service provider liability on behalf of 18 of the nation's principal education and library organizations, including ALA — said that the hearing was a "good dialogue between content providers and Internet service providers."

The right hand doesn't always know what the left hand is doing. Recently heard from the fabulous **Glenda Alvin** (Tennessee State University) <alvin001@HARPO.TN-STATE.EDU> whose new job we told you about. BUT we did not change her **ATG** mailing address and she was scrambling for news of the **1997 Charleston Conference**. Oops! Sorry, Glenda. See you soon, I hope.

AIP and **APS** prevailed in the law suit by **Gordon & Breach**. The freedom to provide academic libraries with information about the cost of scholarly journals was upheld by a federal judge in New York in a decision issued on Tuesday, August 26.

Connie Kelley <cak@poe.acc.virginia.edu> writes that she is devastated! She will not be able to attend the Charleston Conference this year. One of the many things that this fabulous woman is doing is taking two weeks off to show some friends from Wales the Eastern U.S. "I am really going to miss

continued on page 26