On the Road

Alfred Jaeger

Alfred Jaeger, Inc., jaeger@ajaeger.com

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

Part of the Library and Information Science Commons

Recommended Citation
DOI: https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.3164

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.
Surviving Another Year
from page 35

even require that students own them. I am probably too old to be comfortable with the notion of a doctor at my bedside consulting a computer before deciding what to say to me, but it is the future. Will this also be the way of MBAs and JDs and Ph.D.s in geosciences? Probably, and that means we have to again rethink entirely how we organize and deliver information. How does a library relate to information delivered on such very personal information tools? And does that mean that scholarly publishers, who are used to expecting libraries to be their primary channels of distribution, have to change that expectation also to survive?

On what is now the more traditional electronic journal front, the battle as it were is now being fought over usage. As one of my new AP colleagues said fast summer, “we want the eyeballs on our site.” Products that survive via advertising have always had this perspective. What you are promising your advertisers is “eyeballs.” Subscription products that carried little advertising had much less of an orientation toward usage figures. And usage figures for paper were, after all, notoriously hard to get.

But usage is now the name of the game. That means the usage figures have to be clear and accurate. It also would help if everyone were talking the same language. The best effort recently to deal with usage figures has been that of the ICOLC. (I say that not just because our ScienceDirect use reports conform to ICOLC guidelines — but they do!) What is now needed is a way to standardize definitions across services. At Elsevier we would like to see that happen. We are also responding to the notion of providing for an independent audit of usage data — again, something that publications with advertising have done for decades.

Finally, when looking back on survival issues, clearly an extraordinary number of companies did not survive the year unscathed. We have seen the dot.coms disappear with frightening speed. The collapse of netLibrary is an obvious example, but e-book initiatives have been pulled back one after another. This has the look of early pioneers — as you know, you can recognize pioneers by the arrows in their backs. I truly think this is a pause and retrenchment, not an end. But there sure are a lot of talented young people who suddenly think law and medicine look a lot better as careers than that start-up that might go for an IPO within 24 months.

What do I think will be required to survive in the next few years? That is clearly a much harder question. Good and very creative financial skills, whether you are a library or the publisher. Not “creative” in the Enron sense. Just a lot of out-of-the-box thinking about how to reduce costs and spend money wisely. That has to be coupled with a serious ability to be flexible. While I am probably preaching to the converted, nobody is going to last who tries to cling to “but we’ve always done it that way.” But I suspect those folks were flushed from the system long ago.

The need to be flexible is closely coupled to the need to listen. Listening to customers is something we are trying to do. This year within my company a new, explicit set of company values was introduced and these are being taken very, very seriously. One of these is to “value people.” Another is to be “customer-focused.” While “value people” has a strong internal orientation, it obviously also has to be turned toward your customers as well: authors, readers and librarians. I recall more than 20 years ago when I found myself really annoyed with one journal editor and a colleague of mine immediately stopped me and said, “You can’t even think those things. You must always stay positive.” Does that mean the old adage that the customer is always right? Not exactly, but it does mean that if the customer is unhappy, something is wrong.

So, going back to Darwinian principles again, it is survival of the fittest. We are just in the process as a community of redefining what it means to be the fittest.
was standing there in that situation. My particular gripe, especially with the heightened security nationwide, was that the door remained open for almost five minutes, and anybody who would want to hijack the plane or create any problems on board, could have done so at that point. Fortunately, there were no terrorists or insecure people on the flight to disrupt Jet Blue Flight 79 non-stop to New Orleans. I do know that a number of other people observed the door open, maybe not for the approximately five minutes that I noticed it, but certainly it was a breach of security that should not occur, especially with the $10,000 investment for this unique security measure. I personally think that the cockpit doors should remain closed at all times and perhaps even install a lavatory in the cockpit itself. I have always enjoyed flying, both for business and pleasure, and will continue to do so in the future, however, with a deeper sense of who is around me on the plane and the conditions in the cabin during the flight. Needless to say, a few winks of sleep were out of the question as I did want to be aware of the situation around me at all times. That flight was prior to air marshals being installed on almost every flight for added security, however, it made me more alert for that flight and future flights. I do believe that any breaches of security, such as this incident on Jet Blue, should be reported to the airlines so that they could be more diligent in their efforts to protect us passengers in our travels and stop any potential events before they happen. What about the rest of you? I would like to hear about your travels, and not just the vendors and publishers, but also the librarians who travel to different seminars and meetings and board obligations you might have, including speaking engagements for the various library associations. Let us hear about your travels and experiences, many times comical, which I would be pleased to print. Please send it along to me at my e-mail address <jaeger@ajaeger.com> or to my mailing address at Alfred Jaeger, Inc., 66 Austin Blvd., Commack, NY 11725.

Rumors
from page 16

Got an email from the last-time-I-saw-him-he-was-learning-Dutch Albert Prior <Osco@compuserve.com> telling me that he and David Brown have recently acquired the title Scholarly Communications Report from the dapper Duncan Spence.

Mary Page <mspage@rci.rutgers.edu> (Head, Acquisitions Department, Rutgers University Libraries) says she just got around to reading the Dec-Jan issue of ATG and is "thrilled" to learn that the Charleston Conference will again take place in November in 2003. Every year, Mary says, she looks forward to the conference, of course, but her favorite pleasure is her annual trek to the Bob Ellis shoe store, where there is usually a fabulous shoe SALE!! What can I say? Y’all who come to Charleston know more about the place than those of us who just live here. In fact, John Riley <jdriley@mediaone.net> (that’s a new email address so update your records!!) and Don Jaeger <jaeger@ajaeger.com> were going to try to update the Conference Website (in their spare time) with little tidbits from the visitors to Charleston. I’m looking forward to it!

And, speaking again of the awesome John Riley (above) he tells me that Eastern Book has moved to a bigger and better location. Eastern Book Company: 55 Bradley Dr.; Westbrook, ME 04092. All phone, fax, email and Web info stays the same. He is also working on two articles, one by Neil Jaffe about Print on Demand. John himself is also working on an “On the Road” column about coffee shops and cafes in academic libraries. Excuse me, that reminds me, it’s time for coffee. Yr. Ed.