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Issues in Vendor/Library Relations -- Hype

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developers and testers, with collective expertise **Endeavor** could hardly have found in-house, who have materials to test on, and who are willing to help perfect the system. Not only that, testing itself comes with a marketing bonus, since the **ENCompass** team will gladly show their work to potential **ENCompass** customers, and the prestige of the **Cornell** name, displayed on the firm's Website along with those of some forty other institutions testing other **Endeavor** systems, will do no harm when it comes to winning new accounts, market share, and profits for the company.

Cornell, for one thing, gains influence with **Endeavor**. As a test partner, the library can reduce its risk that **ENCompass** would develop in ways not suiting **Cornell**. "They give us a certain amount of focus," according to **Turner**, who feels that the team has been successful not only in the pursuit of **Cornell** interests, which a successful **ENCompass** will serve, but also the interests of large libraries in general. Calhoun believes that the team's work "adds to the library's intellectual capital," and also demonstrates the advantage of an interdisciplinary team approach, a lesson of value for the future. **Meryl Brodsky** found the chance to work on this multi-talented team a "tremendous learning opportunity," a view that **Calhoun**, as Assistant University Librarian, wishes to encourage. "I want to

be on a team like the **ENCompass** team," is the sort of conversation she wants to overhear in library hallways.

Cornell, as well, strengthens its position as a leader among academic libraries, luster which will help to recruit and retain staff, to attract grant money, and to reinforce institutional support from within **Cornell**. Finally, in return for being an early co-developer of **ENCompass**, **Endeavor** provided **Cornell**, already an **Endeavor** customer for other integrated library system modules, with the **ENCompass** software at no cost.

To add it up, then, **Cornell** and **Endeavor** both benefit substantially from their partnership, a word with more meaning here than often is the case when used in library-vendor context. Of course each side gives up certain things in a partnership. The **Endeavor** agreement, for instance, includes confidentiality requirements. **George Kozak** recalls an **Endeavor** visit to **Cornell** when a member of the Computer Science department happened to be in the room. This professor, it surfaced, was by coincidence active in research on matters related to the underpinnings of **ENCompass**. The librarians had to ask the professor to leave the room, which he gracefully did.

What if **ENCompass**, after all in an early stage of life, in the end doesn't work very well? That, believes team members, is unlikely. But, if necessary, the team would find another system, or might write its own, **Calhoun** and her team so believe

that the library world needs what **ENCompass** promises to do. Beyond that, what the group has learned in the course of this project will in itself make the effort a success for **Cornell**, says Calhoun.

"We can't go it alone," she says. The library market and technical landscape both are so fluid and chaotic that a library like **Cornell** needs to enter into outside partnerships and projects, with entities on campus, like the computing center or university press, and with organizations from beyond the campus, such as **Endeavor** and **Sun** and a spectrum of content providers. **Endeavor** and **Cornell** found themselves organizations with overlapping areas of expertise and common problems to solve. With **ENCompass**, are they buyer and seller, partners, or both?

Cornell is one of a handful of libraries that could even think about in-house development of anything so complex as a digital library management system. An organization like **Endeavor**, with considerable but incomplete technical resources of its own—and no anti-slavery pamphlets to work on—has the capital and the marketing strength to bring a perfected system to the libraries who will need one—once somebody develops it for them. "We don't know exactly what it is we're building. We're building as we go," says **Calhoun**, referring to her project's technical and interface challenges. She might have said the same, though, about the relationships being built between library and vendor. 🐘

Issues in Vendor Library Relations — Hype

by **Bob Nardini** (Senior Vice President & Head Bibliographer, YBP Library Services) <rnardini@ybp.com>

H y p e and pornography have a lot in common. Most people you'd ask wouldn't have much good to say about either one, but both surround us, so there must be people who don't object. Both attract, and both repel. Both are big business. And both are hard to define. "I know it when I see it," **Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart's** famous words about pornography, in a case about a French film in Ohio, would have worked as well if the justices had been attempting to define the limits of hype.

He knew it when he saw it in 1964, the date of the Court's opinion. Would **Stewart**, who died in 1985, have been so certain if he

were writing in 2002? Maybe he'd have said exactly the same thing; but chances are some part of the "it" he knew he could spot in 1964, he'd today let pass as entertainment, or commerce, or art. Boundaries changed, and **Stewart** would have changed with them.

The word was not in circulation in 1964, but we were beginning to learn about the practice of hype. **Beatlemania** broke out. **Andy Warhol** had recently painted **Marilyn Monroe**. **Cassius Clay** boasted he'd beat **Sonny Liston** for the heavyweight title, and did. These were all surprises, notable because they were such departures from what anyone had seen before. They stuck out, marvelous individual efforts each one. Hype had not as yet been commodified, professionalized, and modularized, as today, when hype is landscape, like muzak, one track impossible to recall the instant the next has begun. Today,

personal projects in boastfulness or excess would hardly weigh up on the scale as hype at all. Our hype is institutionalized exaggeration, corporate work, planned and sustained, mapped out with monastic discipline and military precision.

The library community was surprised a few years ago to find itself the target of a serious and custom-made operation in hype. This had not happened before. When compared with many other walks of life, the stakes are modest in the library world. No one had previously seen a profit in the considerable effort and expense of a classy hype campaign aimed at libraries. Not, that is, before 1999 and the launch of **netLibrary**.

NetLibrary had \$120 million from investors, **netLibrary** had eBooks, and **netLibrary** had the idea that they could cre-

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ate and then lock up the entire market for a product defined by them. And at the top of the dot.com boom, why not? Their black and red logo, which featured a half-circle, the **netLibrary** name, and an open book enclosing the letter "e," was soon as easy to summon to mind as the Golden Arches. They went in no time from eight employees housed in modest offices, to over three hundred, who enjoyed their own **Boulder, Colorado** "campus." **NetLibrary** speakers were on the program of every library conference, wearing suits more expensive than anyone else's. Their brochures were the glossiest too. Their best contacts received flowers. "Generous" hardly does justice to the handout of **netLibrary** bags, pins, buttons, plaques, and other giveaways, which were everywhere.

An advertising campaign in the library press featured multi-page spreads in black-and-white and subdued color, telling stories of ordinary people blessed by eBooks. The ads obviously came out of a professional agency and were not the homemade "when's the deadline?" work of an in-house sales and marketing department with too much else to do. Other ads were not meant for librarians. Some were directly aimed at students, whom

netLibrary wagered would step up and ask, "Where's the eBooks?" on their own campus. **NetLibrary** conducted the press like a string quartet. *The New York Times* wrote up **netLibrary**. Everybody did. Without a press release in hand to announce that **netLibrary** had partnered with your company, or if a publisher signed up some of your books, or if a library contracted with you or your consortium, you knew you were nowhere. They were the biggest dealmakers we'd ever seen.

Then, something happened. Or rather nothing happened, or not enough. Print books

*"If you enter the ring with hype,
you'd better win." — Muhammad Ali*

held their ground, since it turned out there was no reader clamor for eBooks. Press releases continued anyway, for noticeably longer than the supply lasted for **netlibrary** pins and buttons, which became scarce. Bags too became hard to find. Then, **netLibrary** skipped some conferences. After that, the ads disappeared. The supply of hype, like the giveaways, ran out.

Which put **netLibrary** back in the press, once it was clear that cash was running out too. "**NetLibrary** on the Ropes," was a rep-

resentative headline in one trade journal, whose lead paragraph had news about layoffs, salary cuts, and investor losses. Next were stories about bounced royalty checks to university presses, and serious talks with a potential buyer. The plot climaxed when **netLibrary** was "rescued from oblivion," as one story put it, by **OCLC**, who was the serious-talking buyer. By then, **Time-Warner** had closed down its **iPublish.com**, **MightyWords.com** had folded, **Reciprocal** had gone under, **Adobe** had announced layoffs, and **Questia** had too; five among the eBook "players" all trimming sails like heavy storm-tossed frigates, in tight formation.

"A lot of people — and I was one of those people — made a lot of predictions that were baloney," an official of **Palm Digital Media** remarked to *Publishers Weekly*. Industry spokespeople all but stood in line to deliver humble statements. "We're in this for the long term," remarked the director of eBooks merchandising at **Barnes & Noble**. Attendees at a downsized e-book conference, reported *PW*, agreed now that the hype was past, "the real work is getting done." **Simon & Schuster's** president said, "eBooks are right where they should be." **NetLibrary** broadcast a listserv message to say, "We remain deeply grateful

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to all of our customers, publishers, partners and friends for your notes, calls, and continuing expressions of encouragement and support."

When the mighty fall, encouragement and support rarely are the only feelings expressed. Many bystanders enjoyed the show, and with Goliath already on the turf, Davids everywhere loaded up their slingshots. At a certain point, it was suddenly natural to talk dismissively about eBooks, to say they "weren't ready," to refer to the printed book as an unsurpassed technology platform, and to roll the eyes at the very mention of **netLibrary**. "What? You mean the people in marketing were wrong?" was one facetious listserv header for a posting on eBooks. "What a shock, marketing people over hyping something."

But it hadn't been only the marketing people on this one. Anybody with anything to do with eBooks, it had seemed, briefly, was fully credentialed to offer forecasts at any time and in any medium on the future of the book (none too rosy, in some of them, for the print variety), on reading, education, publishing, scholarship, libraries. The virtual podium got awfully crowded. **NetLibrary** was hardly out there alone.

Should **netLibrary** have done it differently? Could they have promoted their eBooks patiently and quietly, getting to know the market with shoe leather and old-fashioned sales calls, with business cards left on desks, mornings of phone calls, lunch with top prospects? "We think our eBooks might interest you," the **netLibrary** representative suggests to the librarian, as a waitress departs with order in hand. Then the next call, then

write up the day's reports at night, then another day just like it tomorrow.

Their investors must wish that **netLibrary** had done it mostly that way. Which of the rest of us, though, would really have preferred for **netLibrary** to build up the business like some beloved mom-and-pop outfit? Universities, after all, are hardly innocents when it comes to hype. Who didn't enjoy the show? Who wasn't flattered to have such a good ticket for a major production in hype like **netLibrary** staged? Who didn't feel they were witnessing something big, were even a part of it? Who doesn't think **netLibrary** gave it a good go?

And who wasn't half scared to death, for a little while, that the future had come and gone, and pitilessly had left the slow sitting by, caretakers of dusty and undisturbed

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Bet You Missed It

Press Clippings — In the News — Carefully Selected by Your Crack Staff of News Sleuths

Column Editor: **Pamela M. Rose, M.L.S.** (Web Services & Library Promotion Coordinator, Health Sciences Library, Univsity at Buffalo, 3435 Main St., Buffalo, NY 14214-3002; Phone: 716-829-2408 x129; Fax: 716-829-2211) <pmrose@acsu.buffalo.edu> wings.buffalo.edu/~pmrose

JAPANESE LIBRARIES JOLTED by Pamela M. Rose (University at Buffalo)

Escalating subscription prices (nothing new to U.S. libraries) combined with unfavorable exchange rates and decentralized collection development have hit Japanese libraries hard. Additional institutional challenges, such as the spectre of sudden gaps in journal runs due to individual professors canceling their subscriptions and multiple individual departmental libraries, mean the extent of the crisis remains to be discovered. Officials are hoping to take advantage of cheaper online access and joint bargaining power to reduce subscription costs.

See — "Libraries Seek Ways to Hold Down Costs" by **Dennis Normile**, in *Science*, p.429, Jan. 18, 2002.

IN NICHE AD SALES, THE SKY'S THE LIMIT by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Magazines are dying in batches, but **Vulcan Media's** 30 titles are thriving. Publishing niches target an audience for advertisers, and Vulcan plays to this with six outdoor publications and a grab-bag of others like *Heavy Equipment News*.

Vulcan's founder **Douglas Moore** went from mobile home sales to **Randall Publishing's** trucking and construction magazines. "I learned I'd rather sell sky than widgets," he says.

See — **Monte Burke**, "Staying On Target," *Forbes*, p.94, March 4, 2002.

UPPING THE TENURE ANTE by Phil Dankert (Cornell University)

In this Point of View article the author expresses his concern over the "publish or perish" model that exists in academe today. Junior faculty members have to publish more and more these days in order to get tenure. "When someone six years out of graduate school is expected to have written two books...the system has gone beyond absurdity and approaches farce. Aspiring professors may one day have to start roughing out their future books while still in primary school." This coupled with the fact that university presses, primarily for economic reasons, oppose multiple submission of manuscripts causes problems for junior faculty ("It's simply not fair to punish the victims of inflated expectations by making it harder for them to do their jobs in the limited time allotted?"). A suggestion for dealing with this situation is proposed.

See — "Breaking the Unfair Rules of Scholarly Publishing," by **Leonard Cassuto**, *Chronicle Of Higher Education*, January 18, 2002, p. B24.

LATTES AND LEARNING by Phil Dankert (Cornell University)

Although much of what is presented in this article should come as no surprise to librarians, it is still interesting to learn what some university libraries are doing to bring students back. These days, more and more of them "are entering libraries not through turnstiles but through phone lines and fibre-optic cables." What might be called the "**Barnes & Noble Model**" - plush chairs, double mocha lattes, book groups, and even music - seems to be working at some colleges. The big question is whether the dollars invested helps students to learn. There is also disagreement among scholars about what the rise of databases means for scholars. As more and more materials go online there is going to be less and less use of the "bricks-and-mortar library." Is this a bad thing? Some would argue that there are "real problems when students aren't touching books and taking them off the shelves." They are troubled by the way students are using information from the Internet. Finally, if trends show that more and more of the information that people need will be on the desktop, what kind of place will the library be in 20 years?

See — "The Deserted Library: As Students Work Online, Reading Rooms Empty Out—Leading some campuses to Add Starbucks," by **Scott Carlson**, *Chronicle Of Higher Education*, November 16, 2001, p. A35-A38.

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shelves of printed books? All the hype had one sure effect: nobody wanted to be that. The hype threw a spotlight and cast an interrogation lamp too. What was your library doing? Lots of libraries took up with **netLibrary** and bought some eBooks. They learned in a hurry — this was not a distance education opportunity — and figured out how to use them, how to catalog them, how to promote them, how to integrate them into everything else the library was doing. There were some real successes.

Librarians learned a lot about eBooks. Some things they learned were, that there weren't very many of them, that the use model was restrictive, that they were not a bargain, that there were preservation questions, and above all that their patrons' degree of urgency about the need for eBooks was well below that of people in the industry. The hype had been a good teacher.

Should **netLibrary** have done it differently? Should **Clay** have been polite to **Liston**? That would have disappointed everyone, probably even **Liston**. But **Muhammad Ali** always knew something that **netLibrary** now knows too: If you enter the ring with hype, you'd better win.

No two faces are alike

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NUCLEAR KNOWLEDGE
by **Sandy Beehler** (Lewis & Clark College)

Preserving knowledge about nuclear weapons may seem a dubious goal to some, but it could prove crucial to the U.S.'s defenses — an uncertain future that includes rogue nations with nuclear arsenals. In addition to the problem of maintaining millions of paper documents and thousands of electronic files, there is the problem of passing on the knowledge that is held only in the heads of an aging population of nuclear weapons scientists. To address these problems, the U.S. is mounting both digitizing projects and training programs to ensure this information will be available to future generations.

See — "This is Not a Test" in *Wired* 10.03 (March 2002).

LIFE AFTER THE PROPAGANDA MILL
by **Bruce Strauch** (The Citadel)

The Russian intelligentsia makes a come-back for big bucks and the status it brings. In a Moscow dominated by nouveaux riches capitalists, the eggheads moped in destitute squalor. Then **Grigory Chkhartishili** created a 19th-century gentleman sleuth and suddenly found he had foreign language deals, movies and a T.V. series. This was followed by **Tatyana Tolstaya's** experimental novel *Kjs* and **Alexei Slapovsky's** T.V. screenplays, until there are as many as ten (!) authors pulling down 100 to 500K a year.

Chkhartishili was previously employed translating Japanese and piddling with a magnum opus "*The Writer and Suicide*." Enjoying nothing so much as a good walk in a graveyard, he got the idea of his **Slavic Sherlock Holmes** living in what Russians now regard as a Chekovian golden age. Now a nine book superstar, he has T-shirts and a cologne named for his hero for sale online. And a new Peugeot in the drive. But he still thinks in terms of Five-Year Plans.

See — **Guy Chazan**, "Roll Over, Dostoyevsky: Serious Russian Writers Reinvent the Thriller," *Wall Street Journal*, p.A1, Feb. 25, 2002.

ENGINEERED EVERGLADES ECOLOGY
by **Sandy Beehler** (Lewis & Clark College)

It's an interesting question: can a vast and unique ecological system, brought to the brink of ruin by human progress, be saved from ruin without endangering that progress and the human beings it sustains? This article provides a fascinating overview of what ecologists are attempting to achieve in the Florida Everglades. The plan calls for a gradual restoration of the original hydrological systems that sustained this huge wetlands area-including freeing the **Kissimmee River** from its man-made banks, storage of potential flood waters in underground wells, and creation of a marshland to filter pollutants from water flowing into the park area.

See — "Re-engineering the Everglades" *Wired* 10.02 (February 2002).

LET THEM EAT TOAST
by **Bruce Strauch** (The Citadel)

Napster's been KO'd, but music thieving teens are still at it in a major way. **Roxio** produces 70% of the CD "burner" software which is cutely named "Toast." And **Roxio** lusts to branch out into phtos, video and DVDs. But the music empire has struck back with CDs that can't be copied.

Roxio is striving to convince the industry that burning is a positive thing for them. They're only showing a profit on 10% of new music releases anyhow. So why keep backlogs of music inventory that will never sell?

EMI has been won over. For a fee, users can burn music from **Roxio's** Website. The biz plan? Make legit burning easier than stealing.

See — **Nicole Ridgway**, "Let Them Burn," *Forbes*, p.88, March 4, 2002.