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Back Talk-Pros and Cons of Alumni Remote Access to Online Resources

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Adventures in Librarianship from page 82

We believe that this restructuring of the current committee and task force structure will immediately save the library substantial time, money, and resources (structurally).

Considering the results of this study, it would be unreasonable to expect the Vice-Director to implement the Task Force recommendations (above). Therefore we suggest that the results be shelved until such time as the lowest geological strata (some respondents used the name "Hades") accumulates are remarkable abundance of ice crystals.

Webworthy from page 84

nating glimpse of astronomers' visions; the Astronomy Departments list offers nascent astronomers a great snapshot of college choices; and Astronomy Pictures will dazzle viewers with some of the best photos of our universe. cdsweb.u-strasbg.fr/astroweb.html.

Bioweapons

Would you hire a former bioweapons lab scientist? Just how much *Pasteurella tularensis* does it take to cause rabbit fever? Check out these two sites to explore the fascinating topic of Bioweapons.

— Offering an in-depth look at the Chemical and Biological Weapons Nonproliferation Project at the Stimson Center in Washington, D.C. www.stimson.org/cwc.

— All the Virology on the WWW provides a list of disarmament projects and Department of Defense sites, and the full text of the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention. www.virology.net/garryfavwebbw.html.

Botany

Botanists and gardeners alike will be delighted to discover The International Plant Names Index (IPNI), a collaboration between The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, The Harvard University Herbaria, and the Australian National Herbarium. Names and basic bibliographical details of all seed plants were merged from the Index Kewensis (IK), the Gray Card Index (GCI) and the Australian Plant Names Index (APNI) to create the "most comprehensive listing of seed plant names available to date." With ongoing deduplication, standardization and verification of its currently over 1.3 million species, this will become the botanical names resource of choice. Future plans include setting up additional mirror sites, allowing users to contribute data directly, offering subscriptions, and allowing links to remote databases. Note that finding a plant name listed in IPNI does not mean it is the currently accepted name of an particular taxon. www.ipni.org.

Here's Looking At from page 66

opment, walkable schools, and work options located near homes. They want accessible public transit, and a less intensive focus on providing parking. A key-stone of their remedy is the use of an "alternative zoning code" called the "traditional neighborhood development ordinance" rather than trying to work on a revision of current code, which would be too time-consuming and difficult.

This review would not be complete without noting this book's presence as a physical, tangible object. It is no coffee-table book, but it is beautiful. It is a pleasure to hold, behold, and to read. The wide margins leave ample space for notes, and fingers, as well as for telling photographs. Most of the notes are laid out at the bottom of the page, which means the reader is not constantly flipping to the back. The book opens fully and stays open when laid down.

In short, this is a refreshing, compelling book — inside and out. It cuts to the very heart of what is wrong with the way we are making our America. Please read it, and take up the authors' chant: no more housing subdivisions! No more shopping centers! No more office parks! No more highways! Neighborhoods or nothing!

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Web. This way the alumni receive value from their schools but not at the cost of supporting today's students.

Contributors to the *Liblicense* list on this topic which I read included the following: *Ann Okerson, Dana Bostrom, Elhanan Adler, JoAnne Deeken, John Abbott, John Cox, Katherine Klemperer, Katherine Porter, Martin Borchert, Michael Spinella, Michele Newberry, Peter Boyce, Richard d'Avigdor, Rick Anderson, Scott Wicks, and Thomas Sanders.*

Rumors from page 76

versity, University of Southern California, Texas A&M University, Virginia Tech University, University of Western Ontario, University of Wisconsin-Madison, and Yale University. The institutions are providing both the financial resources for the project as well as staff time for data collection and testing of methodologies. An article about the project appears in the June issue of *ARL: A Bimonthly Report on Research Library Issues and Actions from ARL, CNI, and SPARC* <<http://www.arl.org/news/210/emetrics.html>> and, throughout the project's three phases, information about the study and its activities will be available through the **ARL New Measures Initiative** Website at <<http://www.arl.org/stats/newmeas/newmeas.html>>, which also hosts resources relating to the other ARL new measures projects. For further information, contact **Rush Miller**, University of Pittsburgh <rgmiller@pitt.edu>; **Sherrie Schmidt**, Arizona State University <sherrie.schmidt@asu.edu>; or **Martha Kyrrilidou**, ARL Senior Program Office for Statistics and Measurement <martha@arl.org>.

Well, y'all, I have a huge **Rumors** file still not tapped and I've run out of room! I told you the summer was unbelievably busy! Stay tuned for November!

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Back Talk — Alumni Remote Access to Online Resources

by Tony Ferguson <ferguson@columbia.edu>

Over the past week (July 19, 2000) or so there has been a great interchange going on the Yale University sponsored Liblicense-L list serve (<http://www.library.yale.edu/~llicense/index.shtml>) about whether alumni ("former students" at Texas A&M where I once worked) should be allowed remote access to commercial databases, e-journals, etc. I'd like to share with you the major arguments made by this bright group of information professionals in favor of access, against access, and finally add my own observations. I thought about listing the name of the person who discussed each argument but decided that too often it made it appear that they favored the argument when in reality they were only discussing what they in fact opposed. Consequently, I will simply list their names at the bottom of this article and thank them all for sharing with the world their thoughts on this important topic.

Arguments in favor of remote alumni access to Library supported commercial sources of information:

1. Walk-in alumni already get access, why not those living far away?
2. Former students made a significant investment, why shouldn't they continue to benefit?
3. Colleges and universities need alumni fiscal support, benefits like these will encourage increased largesse.
4. Since few of these very "academic resources" will actually be used, why not permit this use?
5. Since some institutions are already doing it, all must provide this sort of access to be competitive.
6. Some licenses already allow it with seemingly little or no adverse consequences, e.g., Project Muse.
7. There is a demand for it and we are in the business of meeting information demands.
8. Alumni associations are integral parts of most colleges and universities. Members of alumni associations should therefore have access to the resources of the college or university.
9. Expanded access to information contributes to the wellness of our society and that, in the long run, will contribute to the vitality of the publishing enterprise.
10. Distance learning is a growth industry for most colleges and universities, expanded access to information is a "given" not a "maybe."

Arguments against remote alumni access to Library supported commercial sources of information:

1. Identifying and authenticating an ever-expanding group of former students is difficult and expensive.
2. Many publishers are already fiscally on the brink; any revenues lost threaten their existence.
3. Money spent meeting the needs of yesterday's students is money not spent meeting the needs of today's students.
4. Alumni are not only former students but they are also employees of companies. These companies should pay for the professional information needs of their employees.
5. License negotiation is already protracted and costly. Adding the need to negotiate alumni access only adds to the difficulties and the costs of this process.
6. If alumni associations want to add information support benefits, they, not libraries, should negotiate and pay for them.
7. Opens the gates to all sorts of abuse, e.g., the spouses of alumni providing their employers with free access to information, the friends of alumni are given the passwords needed to gain access, etc.
8. Government and private support for higher education is already inadequate and tenuous. Redirecting funds to the needs of yesterday's students will both water down the value of what we can give today's students and cause our supporters to question the value of the purposes for which their support is used.
9. There is really little alumni demand for this sort of informational support. This is just a librarian thing.
10. Colleges and universities enjoy educational discounts for many databases, e.g., chemistry, pharmaceutical medicine, etc. Why endanger these discounts?
11. When the alumni were students, the fees they paid were according to the programs of which they were a part. If they want access to commercial sources of information, why should things be different now?
12. The alumni pay for other benefits like football tickets, why not commercial sources of information?
13. Doubtful if most alumni would favor someone taking a part of their contributions to pay for the information needs of other alumni who are not willing to pay their fair share.
14. When a course ends, the student loses the right to the professor's time and energy.

Why should access to the library's digital resources be any different?

My own observations.

Arguments in favor of extending free access to commercial sources of digital information assume that since information is good, it is good to share it freely. The arguments against this sharing assume that to do so will incur extra costs for everyone involved: publishers, libraries, and higher education funding groups and that those who benefit should pay. I find I side with those in opposition to extending free access to an institution's alumni. Nothing is free; the questions are: who will pay and when will they pay?

At times, as information professionals, we are frustrated that our patrons fail to understand that many of the e-journals and other resources they are looking at are there only because we are paying the bills. We want, therefore, to have our logo or brand on these pages so that our patrons won't forget just how important our library budgets are to their success. On the other hand, when an issue like providing free access to former students comes up, many of us are only too willing to pretend that this information is free, or at least that any extra costs should be absorbed by publishers who are already making too much money. If we want to provide "free" access, someone will have to pay for it: today's students who will get less, publishers who will raise their prices, or the private or public groups that make our work possible.

I am in favor of supporting distance education and lifelong learners. I just returned from a month of interviewing television university librarians, students and teachers in China about their informational needs. These needs are very real. I felt many times how nice it would be to allow the students and faculty at some of these schools to access Columbia's resources. Yet, I have to recognize that decisions to share information require money to make them a reality. As information professionals, we shouldn't redistribute resources from today's student needs to yesterday's students in silence. We have to fight for additional resources and/or recognize that we just can't share what we don't have. Here at home, I don't think it has to be all or nothing. I think we can help alumni groups develop (not do it for them) information resource homepages that take full advantage of the many truly free resources that are otherwise lost in the chaotic richness of the

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