June 2001

Adventures in Librarianship: If Rumors Were Mules

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Recommended Citation
DOI: https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.3518

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which acquires much of its material by having individuals physically pick up material within Africa.

Collection Development
Collection Development is part of every subject librarian’s job description and is co-ordinated by a Collection Development Manager, who approves all orders. Subject areas, rather than departments, are the focus of collection development.

The Library controls the budget, but information on notional amounts is provided to the academic departments. Purchases are based on needs. Requests are encouraged from the academics, but staff, students or librarians can initiate orders. The approval of new journal titles is more difficult because of the problem of ongoing commitment. The Libraries are faced with annual inflation rates of between 25 and 40 per cent due to the weakness of the South African currency and publishers’ price increases.

Budgetary control for the purchase of library materials was removed from the academics in 1998. Journals no longer are circulated, including those which were once housed within small and unofficial departmental collections. These changes have brought dissatisfaction from some academics, particularly those from the Science Faculty, who have previously worked with highly decentralized resources.

The Future
The major changes in the Libraries — as well as the major physical renovations and building — are part of the overall plan to enhance UCT’s ability to be a world-class African university in the 21st century. Past practices have had to change, so that staff and students can have as wide access to material as possible, within the limited materials budget of about $4 million for 2001.

UCT is a very stimulating place to work as the institution tries to deal with transformation and equity issues within a framework of a changing student and staff profile. All of the problems of academic libraries are here. In addition, however, UCT faces a set of problems which are very different: significant devaluation of the currency; providing a first-rate education for a mix of students from different levels of information and language literacy; inability of the public library system to meet the broader information needs of business and the community; and an economic environment in which unemployment runs at 37.3%.

South Africa has made a radical transformation in the 1990s, and UCT and its Libraries are taking the lead in the academic sector in ensuring that first rate education is available to a broad range of the population, as these graduates will be the future leaders of the country.

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by Ned Kraft (Order Librarian, Ralph J. Bunche Library, U.S. Department of State) <krafno@state.gov>

The following text was submitted anonymously. It appears to be a clumsy satire of a column written by our own beloved Katina Strauch. If any of us should happen upon the willful writer of this drivel haunting the dark corners of some convention or other, I would suggest that we simply ignore him. -NK

Wow! Stocks may be falling and our 401K retirement dates may be creeping ever-so-far into the future but my library and publishing-world friends keep moving up and up.

The incredible, tallish, and very-nearly-likable Gary Plush of Niche Enterprise Publishing just informed me that Niche has quite handily averted bankruptcy by selling itself to MallMart Inc., the retail mega-chain from Milwaukee. Good job, Gary! And just in the “niche” of time! Gary says that MallMart has given him carte blanche to reorganize Niche into a profitable publisher, and won’t sell off the assets for at least three months!

Our old friend, the oh-so-wonderful Kitty Hamper from Darkmound Uni-

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PaperPath, Inc. streamlining the flow of information

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Number of employees: 16
President: Julian H. Fisher, MD
Officers of the company: Julian H. Fisher, MD

Background: Dr. Julian H. Fisher, President and Founder, has worked for two decades in information systems development. A neurologist on the Harvard Medical School faculty since 1979 and Senior Associate in Neurology at Harvard’s Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston since 1981, he developed the first CD-ROM medical textbook in 1987, for Little, Brown & Co.

Electronic Products: Advanced Web-based software to facilitate online review worldwide, including complete document tracking and management, online peer review and editorial decision-making and comprehensive workflow oversight and control. PaperPath 2000 Editorial Suite enables all participants in the editorial process, authors, reviewers, editors, editorial assistants and publishing staff, wherever they are located, to work locally or globally over the Internet on a shared database. The product utilizes two Web-based approaches technologically, with a simple browser interface for occasional users (authors, reviewers and advisory editors) and a unique marriage of Web and Windows technology (the new Microsoft .NET strategy) for power users (editorial staff and editors).

Key Developments: PaperPath has concluded an agreement with British Broadcasting Corporation Technology, Ltd. (BBCT) as a global application service provider (ASP) for PaperPath 2000 Editorial Suite. This service agreement offers end-to-end editorial management solutions for journals, societies, and small to mid-sized publishers who want to work over the Internet without maintaining Internet technology in-house.

Editor’s Note: I think that all ATG readers are aware of how special our scholarly community is, and how we can sometimes get the opportunity to associate with awesome people who make our community unique. So it was a delight for me to actually meet Dr. Fisher on another occasion; and most important, to learn the salient features of his impressive company.

In closing, I wanted to ask Dr. Fisher to elucidate how the transition occurred from his work in neurology; to author of the first CD-ROM medical textbook for Little, Brown & Co.; to founding of PaperPath, Inc.

Here is Dr. Fisher’s inspiring reply: As a physician, I was concerned about quality of care and errors in clinical care. When I lost both parents through medical malpractice, related to incorrect use of medical information, I decided to involve myself in new approaches to medical information for physicians and for patients. This led to my developing an online medical record system designed for group practices in the early 1980’s (PULSE), the first CD-ROM textbook in medicine (1987) and the most widely distributed patient information kiosk system (HealthTouch) in the late 1980’s and early 1990’s in the nation, located in high-volume chain and small community pharmacies. A logical extension was to develop better ways for scholarly information to be evaluated and exchanged, with PaperPath’s early versions appearing in 1996. As the desire for greater collaboration among researchers (authors, reviewers and editors) grew, we moved to take advantage of innovative technology, creating working communities of scholars — working together over the Web more cleverly and efficiently than they had been able to previously. Whether the area of interest is molecular biochemistry, archaeology or political science, the need to exchange information rapidly has grown from a wish to a requirement. That has been our interest in enhancing and further developing PaperPath — to speed the flow of information.