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Report from Fiesole III-The Fiesole Collection Development Retreat Series

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A View from Africa from page 87

The following figures from an article on e-commerce in the local **Cape Town** newspaper (*Cape Times Business Report*, 15 November, 2000 p. 11) highlight the problem. There are about 3 million Internet users in Africa, of whom about 2 million are in South Africa. That means that there is about one Internet user for every 250 people in Africa, compared to the world average of one for every 35 persons. Africa's 780 million people have as many Internet hosts as **Latvia's** 2.5 million people.

The main problem is that the communications infrastructure is not in place. For most African governments, providing basic housing and education has had to be a higher priority than building communication links. Telephone densities are below one for every 100,000 people. Even if people had the money for computers, there is not the infrastructure to provide access, and what access there is, is expensive. To use the Internet is very costly. A typical charge for about 5 hours a month would be around \$50, compared to about \$29 for 20 hours in the United States of America.

My own institution is the **University of Cape Town (UCT)**, where I am fortunate to work in a relatively well-endowed library, by African standards. We have Internet access and, therefore, are able to give our users elec-

tronic resources. However, these resources are expensive, and we face fiscal obstacles which make it difficult for us to deliver the services our users need.

Though financial issues have clearly had an impact on library collections worldwide, South Africa faces its own set of additional constraints. First, South African academic libraries have to import over 85% of materials purchased, and thus have to pay additional costs to those of American libraries. Apart from having to pay First World prices with very small discounts, there are shipping costs, as well as a 14% value added tax imposed on goods and services. Unlike many American institutions, universities are not exempt from this taxation, even though they are partially state-supported. At **UCT Libraries**, we estimate that any item acquired from First World publishers in fact costs about 125% of the cost to North American buyers.

Two other factors have a major impact: (1) the annual price hikes by journal publishers which affect academic libraries worldwide and (2) the localised depreciation of the South African currency, the Rand, against First World currencies. In 1993 3.33 Rands bought \$1 worth of library materials. By the time of the **2000 Charleston Conference**, it took 7.66 Rands to buy the same \$1 in materials. (By the time of **ALA 2001** the Rand had devalued further

to 8.14.) **UCT Libraries'** materials budget for 2000 was R17 million (\$2.22 million), which was more than double the 1997 budget of R7.6 million (\$2.3 million), but less in dollar terms. Despite regular journal cancellation exercises, the ratio of books to journals continues to be very unbalanced. A decade ago the ratio of books to journals was 31:69, at present it is 15:85.

South Africa is one of the most prosperous countries in Africa, and **UCT** one of the top ten endowed African universities, so that the problems **UCT** faces are small compared to those of the majority of African universities. Fiscal and technological constraints result in only a privileged few in Africa having access to electronic information. Without the hardware and software infrastructure to work effectively, many African academics look to the First World for jobs, further impoverishing the intellectual capital of Third World countries.

It is in this context that I am concerned about more and more information becoming available exclusively electronically. The publishers are publishing this way with their primary market, the First World, in mind. If the publishers do not make provision for this other market, Africa will literally become the "Dark Continent," excluded from cutting edge ideas because of poor technological infrastructure and weak purchasing power. 🌿

Report from Fiesole III: The Fiesole Collection Development Retreat Series

by Alex Holzman (Cambridge University Press) <aholzman@cup.org>

Seventy-five librarians, publishers, and aggregators were fortunate enough to participate in the third **Fiesole Collection Development Retreat**, held at the **European University Institute**, March 22-24, and hosted by the good folks at both the **EUI** and **Casalini Libri**. A slightly different group also enjoyed the hospitality of the **University of Florence** at a preconference on Scholarly Communication and University Presses, which also included many people from the university community.

The preconference keynote address was delivered by **Michael Keller**, University Librarian and Director of University Presses and HighWire, **Stanford University**. As someone who is both librarian and university press publisher, **Mike** was able to provide a capsule review of how both professions have evolved over the past fifty years, and a peek at how they might co-operate in the future. He noted that electronic publishing can help both communities in both defining new audiences and in focusing their

efforts on areas that sell and are used.

Stevan Harnad of the **University of Southampton** then updated the audience on the Self-Archiving Initiative, presenting his impassioned plea that authors publish only with journals that allow them to post "free" copies of their articles on their own Websites. By so doing, he argued, the availability of scientific knowledge would be enhanced enormously. **Professor Harnad's** talk sparked frequent and occasionally heated responses from publishers and librarians alike.

Subsequent presentations provided summaries of a wide variety of scholarly publishing initiatives, including the **Roquade** project in the Netherlands, the **European Partnership on Scholarly Publishing**, the **European Mathematical Information Service**, the fascinating launch of **Firenze University Press** as an electronic-only publisher, and other recent developments in scholarly publishing. In addition, **Anthony Watkinson** discussed the legal deposit of electronic publications and associated archiving problems

as well as presenting an overview of the publishing role in the communication of knowledge in which he argued that publishers help organize knowledge and its presentation.

The **Fiesole** group convened the following day at the **European University Institute**, where it was welcomed most graciously by **EUI** president **Patrick Masterson** and the **National Library of Florence** Director, **Antonia Ida Fontana**. The subsequent program was divided into sessions on "invisible communities" involving libraries and scholarly communication; the evolving role of consortia; and electronic teaching materials -- in short, the various impacts of digital communication. Invisible communities involve users who can come to supposedly academic information from communities of activists, professionals, government people, and the like. Examples ranged from desalination communities to astronomy communities to clinical medicine -- all presenters were enthusiastic about the ways the Web is allow-

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WEBWORTHY —

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*Websites selected for broad appeal, depth of information, and ease of access. Sites are organized by broad subject area and are visited just prior to publication. Please let the editor know of any sites that are not accessible. Comments and suggestions welcome to **Pamela M. Rose, Health Sciences Library, University at Buffalo, 3435 Main St., Buffalo, NY 14214-3002; 716-829-2408** <pmrose@acsu.buffalo.edu>. Unless otherwise noted in square brackets following the description, Internet addresses were published in *Science*, *NetWatch* column edited by **Jocelyn Kaiser**. — PR*

Crocodiles

Did you know that female crocs tote their youngsters around in their mouths? Or that crocs are the most vocal of reptiles? The Crocodilians Website offers a detailed species list, a crocodilian biology database, a communication section where you can hear the sounds crocs make, and the most detailed captive care FAQ available ("only serious keepers need apply!"). Generally considered threats to humans and livestock and simply vermin to be eliminated, the decline and endangerment of two-thirds of the world's crocodilians has been reversed by the Crocodile Specialist Group (CSG), a worldwide network of various professionals actively involved in the conservation of alligators, crocodiles, caimans, and gharials in the wild. — <http://www.crocodilian.com/>

Biology

Designed for an introductory biology course at MIT, the MIT Biology Hypertextbook is laid out in chapters just like a standard textbook, but also offers a nifty tutorial, practice problems, and quizzes, not to

mention the versatility of Web links and the ability to search for a specific topic. — <http://esg-www.mit.edu:8001/esgbio/7001main.html>

Natural History

Quick: who was the Father of American Vertebrate Paleontology, the Founder of American Parasitology, a leading teacher in human anatomy and natural history and an expert in areas as diverse as entomology, geology and pathology? The Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences Website offers an online exhibit and tribute to Joseph Leidy, one of the leading American scientists of the 19th century. Browse through his biography timeline to get a sense of how he lived, learn about the incredible breadth of subjects he pursued, or read about his study of fossils and how he contributed to knowledge of the dinosaurs through his study of *Hadrosaurus foulkii*. — <http://www.acnatsci.org/leidy/index.html>

Paleontology

Dedicated to preserving the Coelacanth (literally "hollow spine" from the Greek), a cousin of the ancestor of all land vertebrates thought to be extinct, "The Fish Out of Time" Website offers a number of interesting tidbits, including the opportunity to buy a "living fossil" — a young Madagascan Giant Hissing Roach that will grow to its 2-3 inch adult size in a few months. The site's author, Jerome Hamlin, recounts his exciting descent to view coelacanths in their native locale, a cave 640 feet below earth's surface. The history of the discovery of the living specimens, *Latimera*, is presented, along with online videos and a collection of related links. — <http://www.dinofish.com/>

Public Policy

From Abortion to the Right to Die, Public Agenda, a nonpartisan, nonprofit public opin-

ion research and citizen education organization founded in 1975, seeks to help leaders better understand the public's point of view on major policy issues and help citizens better understand those policy issues so they can make their own more informed and thoughtful decisions. Each topic is clearly and concisely presented in a common outline format from two perspectives: Understanding the Issue and Public Opinion. The site also offers a newsletter (in pdf format), as well as an opportunity to invite a Public Agenda representative to your next meeting. — <http://www.publicagenda.org/>

Space Travel

Fascinating facts abound in this online version of an exhibit, "2001: Destination Space" running at the Tech Museum of Innovation in San Jose, CA. For example, did you know Swiss inventor George de Mestral conceived his invention, velcro (used on the shoes of flight attendants in Stanley Kubrick's film "2001: A Space Odyssey"), after observing the burrs that stuck to him and his dog after a nature hike in 1948? The name "velcro" was created from "velour" and "crochet."

The exhibit celebrates the arrival of the year depicted in Kubrick's film. The site offers an intriguing comparison of fiction technology depicted in the film to fact technology today. Browse the gallery of works by visionary "space artist" Robert McCall (whom Kubrick enlisted to paint posters for the film), view streaming video interviews with five artists and scientists, and visit a selection of learning resources particularly suitable for classroom use as well as a list of Websites directly related to the original movie. [Requires Real Player and Macromedia Flash] — <http://www.thetech.org/2001ds/>

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ing them to reach these new communities while also recognizing some problems posed by ownership issues, privacy issues, and the like.

The consortia session looked at consortia widely defined, including a presentation regarding the relationship between library and university press, where the **Temple University Press** now reports to the library; case studies of the UK and Germany; an analysis of how libraries within consortia need to cooperate amongst themselves to build distinct collections; and a controversial presentation from **Michael Mabe** of **Elsevier** arguing that the so-called "crisis" in scholarly publishing

stems from a long-term decline in library acquisitions funding as a percentage of overall university budgets. This lively session provided jumping-off points for just about every aspect of collection building one could imagine.

The consensus in the digital teaching/learning portion of the program really seemed to coalesce around the idea that while there is much potential, distance learning via the Net does not offer quite the gold rush potential that many seemed to be predicting a few years ago. Various initiatives in the UK and US were reviewed and the need for libraries and publishers to work together to create an electronic infrastructure that allows researchers and students to work efficiently noted. This need

for simple and seamless systems across publishers, platforms, and fields was reinforced by Michael Keller in his closing remarks.

But it wasn't all work! Between the many sessions and during a couple of delightful dinners and a wonderful cocktail reception hosted by and at **Casalini Libri** there were numerous chances to discuss these issues informally, to exchange war stories, to network, and most especially to enjoy the beautiful scenery and lovely spring weather offered up by **Fiesole**. Everyone who attended felt very lucky on both intellectual and aesthetic grounds to have the opportunity to be present and all look forward to the July 2002 collection development conference in the Netherlands.