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Nighttime Musings of a Sleepless Librarian

by **Ann Okerson** (Yale University, Associate University Librarian) <ann.okerson@yale.edu>

I probably do not lie awake at night worrying about my job any more than the next person does, but when I do, I talk to myself about our digital futures. The reason for the wee-hours (those hours when problems are magnified) worry is that I'm no longer certain just what we mean by the term "digital libraries." Are we ever going to "get there" or have we been living in them for years?

Does the term "digital library" mean that all of our collections will someday be digital? Will readers be able to have the full experience of a contemporary library (and more besides) without going near one of our wonderful library buildings? Probably not, for the range, power, and longevity of analog media cannot be readily dislodged. Types of library use may change and digital artifacts may take more and more of the time and attention of librarians and users, but traditional collections will continue to grow and to be used for decades if not centuries to come. Indeed, some of the changes happening around us serve to reinforce traditional structures. That is, without thinking, it is easy to imagine libraries as places for paper books and to imagine that if paper books fade in use and importance, the places will similarly shrink in importance. But these places have long been ones where people go to work; they are quiet and organized, with effective support systems (librarians, for example), where colleagues or fellow students can be found with whom to share at least a cup of coffee or a hallway conversation and perhaps a more structured collaborative and intensive working period.

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international supplier of books to academic, medical, professional and reference libraries for materials available in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. <http://www.oclc.org/oclc/menu/prompt.htm>.

At the Conference, say hello to **Willem-Jan Hooijmans** <hooijmans@nedbook.nl> who has just been promoted new Sales Manager for North America for **Nedbook International**. **Willem-Jan** worked at **Swets** for 14 years and worked closely with the fabulous **Peter Nijsten** before joining **NedBook**. I remember meeting **Willem-Jan** when **Mike Markwith** was CEO at **Swets & Zeitlinger, Inc.** And **Ron Steensma** will also be in Charleston. Welcome, one and all!

Have you seen this article? **Digital Rights Management for Libraries** by **Denise M. Davis** and **Tim Lafferty**? Worth a read. <http://www.emeraldinsight.com/pdfs/bl151.pdf>.

I found out about this article (above) through **Jill O'Neill's** <jilloneill@nfais.org> **Noteworthy NFAIS Website**. Check it out — now! <http://www.nfais.org/noteworthy.asp>.

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By the above demanding definition, we are not "there" yet. Yet, if we think about libraries more flexibly, we have been "there," i.e., in digital libraries, for some time. The advent of online public catalogs and e-journals has already revolutionized work for both librarians and users. One cannot help but be reminded of **Anthony Appiah's** statement in his essay "Realizing the Virtual Library:" "The library I never go to is one of the most important places in my life." Even the print materials that we now use in libraries are organized and accessed and approached through digital forms, and many are digital-only resources.

So we are in transition, and perhaps we always will be. What is important, what is pressing, what is urgent for the next few years? When I get to that point in the early-morning hours, it is pretty clear that there is much to think about, and I will be awake for some time, possibly in somewhat of a fretful mode.

We all have our own lists of night-time frets, and my list is probably a lot like that of many other librarians with similar responsibilities. We all are juggling resources to meet an ever-increasing demand for a rapidly increasing body of books, journals, and e-resources. It appears to be one of the anomalies of our economics that library budgets tend to grow with inflation (more, or a little too often, less), at the same time as the growth in output of the publishing and information industries is driven by forces that make it unlikely that supply will grow as modestly. In an odd sort of way, it is the modesty of demand — the limited time and attention our readers can bring to bear on their work — that helps to keep the growth of reader needs somewhere in line with the growth of library resources.

Once I have finished (temporarily) fretting about resources, I can turn to some niggling worries. For example, just now one very small online product, at least as measured by number of users and cost to the library, is giving many academic libraries headaches because its entirely worthy, not-for-profit European producer is naively insisting on provisions of its license that most American libraries cannot sign. Rights and license issues are significant niggers, even as together we all have made a great deal of progress in the last five years building publisher/library relations to the point where it is possible to make a lot of workable agreements for users. There are technological glitches as well as

we try to make sure that older resources work well with the most recent computer systems and vice versa. For example, which browser is our campus technology service currently supporting and which online resources will crash that browser? Confessedly, I used to become much more exercised about niggling things than I do these days. Partly, my newfound tranquility stems from the naturalization of e-resources into the library; so those librarians who are responsible for identifying, acquiring, and supporting the resources at a management level see more and more library staff ready, able, and eager to handle the daily operational issues as part of their jobs.

If I did have a list of wee-hours digital resources issues posted on a sticky-note, that note would have half a dozen small items on it, but the capitalized logo across the top would be pretty simple:

It's The Users, Stupid!

I hasten to add that that note would be addressed to myself! Lying awake at night — this is the awful truth — I am mostly worrying that we librarians may have lost track of that one, that we may have gotten too preoccupied by the technology and the process, i.e., the niggling

little things. Of course it would be gratifying to think that I am ahead of my time in conceiving such a brilliant strategic principle as focus on the readers, whereas in fact, I am probably running as fast as I can to catch up with everybody else who realized that straightforward principle before I did.

Ten years ago, it was entrancing to imagining the e-future. Five years ago, it was exhilarating to grab our tools and pitch in to building it. Now all of us librarians are putting down the tools for a break, taking a deep breath, and looking around to see what it is we are doing and why/for whom. And the measure of our success is principally in the effect we have on the user community. What is it readers need? Why do they use library resources? What problems do they face? Those are the *strategic* questions of today. Those strategic questions would have us ponder, in the right way, the appropriate mix of traditional and digital resources. There is no prescriptive answer to what library users ought to want, but there are abundant instances of what actual individuals do want and why they use libraries. Returning to the *user* as the focus of our choices is a way to control and direct what could otherwise be superabundant energy going in too many directions, without supporting resources for all those directions.

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What I write here may be seen as conservative. And if it were true that library users are habit-driven, conservative, and fearful of change, it might well be the case. No such stereotype, however, accurately captures the real variety of extremely intelligent and resourceful people who make up our communities. Comparatively few users are as conservative as even we at 300-year old academic libraries like to say that they are.

But — the most traditional thing about library management is the thing that offers the antidote to any excess conservatism. That is, librarians are custodians of the past, but they think constantly about the future. For custodianship is worthless unless it anticipates future developments — opportunities as well as risks. Librarians have always bought for their collections with one eye to the present readers' needs and a second eye to the future needs of readers who will come in place of the ones now here. It is our — librarians' — job to make sure we find a sustainable and responsible level of collecting that will make our collection valuable twenty or fifty years from today. There is no science to implementing that sense of responsibility; it is an art we have long ago mastered.

In a world of transition from all-analog to a blend of analog and digital materials, it is exactly that same *conservative* sense of responsibility that will keep librarians most alert to creating collections of future as well as present value. The art of building collections that serve the present and the future: that is the art we need to transfer, apply, reinvigorate, and cherish. If serving our present and future readers is the most difficult thing about dealing with digital resources, it is also the one that our traditional library skills leave us feeling most qualified to handle.

And there in my two a.m. reverie is where I can finally fall asleep. 🐼

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As we go to press, **Edna Laughrey** <elaughrey@aol.com> has told me about the death of one of her mentors and a man who inspired many of us throughout his life, **Frank Clasquin**. See this issue p.8.

Y'all — Who would have ever believed that *ATG* would grow into such a big, substantial publication! I was recently reading **Bill Katz'** *Magazines for Libraries* (2002 edition) glowing review of *ATG* and, well, it brought a smile of pride to my eyes for all of us crazy acquisitions and collection development and serials librarians who work to put this together all the time. Thank you all! And, there's so much held over this time, for which we apologize, but watch for it in the next exciting issue ... Coming soon ... 🐼

ATG Special Report: Part II — Libraries In The Cyberage

by **Mark Y. Herring** (Dean of Library Services,
Dacus Library, Winthrop University)
<herringm@winthrop.edu>

The forums covered here include the conclusion of **Clancy's** article favoring library filters. Essentially, **Clancy's** argument is that the disadvantages of filtering are far fewer than those of not filtering. **Clancy** claims, first of all, that filtering does

not impinge upon the First Amendment because it has never protected obscenity and/or pornography. Secondly, she argues that the dangers of unfiltered Internet access pose such grave risks to others that the unfiltered choice is unconscionable.

Libraries In The Cyberage — Filtering, Censorship and the First Amendment: Libraries at the Crossroads

by **Carol A. Clancy, Esq.** (Senior Counsel, National Law Center for
Children and Families) <http://www.NationalLawCenter.org>

Filtering Adult Internet Access Closes Library Door to Sexual Exploitation.

In *New York v. Ferber*,⁶⁸ the United States Supreme Court stated that:

[T]he distribution network for child pornography must be closed if the production of material which requires the sexual exploitation of children is to be effectively controlled.

Today, the Internet constitutes a major part of the "distribution network" for child pornography. The Library should use filtering technology to close access *by adults* to all Internet based child pornography distribution networks.

After a rash of incidents involving individuals using public libraries to download child pornography, the pedophile-monitoring group "**PedoWatch.org**" made allegations that "on-line pedophiles" were telling each other to use public libraries to download child pornography. **PedoWatch** director **Julie Posey** stated:

Basically what happens out there is that pedophiles on the Internet "network" together. It is much like just about any other interest that a person may have. There are mailing lists, message boards, chat rooms and multitudes of other resources that they use. When a particular pedophile finds that the Library is a safe secure place to view and download pornography, he shares this information with others with his same interests that he comes in contact with. Some libraries won't allow downloading so that information is passed on too. Remember that before there can be child pornography in the first place, there has to be a perpetrator and a vic-

tim. I have seen cases where pedophiles on the Internet use the Library to talk with children and eventually lure them to have a face-to-face meeting. These children are then molested, photos taken and further exploited when he sends the child's pictures to masses on the Internet.⁶⁹

The development of computer technology has made the instant, electronic transfer of child pornography in many cases virtually undetectable by present law enforcement techniques, and made it invisible to Library management and staff. Today the entire contents of an illegal adult bookstore can be stored in and transmitted through computer networks. The technical expertise and resources of Internet-based criminals currently far surpasses that of federal and state law enforcement, and that of any Public Library. Internet filters used to screen and block adult access to proscribed materials, can help close the doors of the Public Library to the distribution network for child pornography, and can help deter the creation of "secondary effects" related to the regular and continuous dissemination of sexually explicit pornographic materials. In order for the law to be effective, law enforcement agencies need the support of all public entities — including the Public Library.

Internet Filter Use Advances Important Library Goals.

The "effectiveness" of filter technology has vastly improved since the United States Supreme Court first discussed and indicated support for "user-based software technology" in rendering the *Reno v. ACLU* decision.⁷⁰ The implementation of user-based Internet filtering technology directly and materially advances:

- (1) the goal of preventing minors from

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