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Back Talk-Be Careful What You Wish For

Anthony W. Ferguson

Columbia University, ferguson@columbia.edu

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to their contributions. Stated simply, it would be built upon the shared cataloging economic model (participants contribute scanned books instead of bibliographic records), but with the revenues shared by the participants instead of being held by the bibliographic utilities. The price to use the database of collaboratively digitized books would need to be set at a level to encourage use. The profits derived (to be shared by those contributing content) would need to be at a level to encourage the contribution of content. In this sort of model, universities, libraries, and publishers can all be winners.

The strengths of this model includes putting the acrimony and hostility that has characterized our relationship behind us while at the same time increasing the amount of information that one can access without seeking each member's fiscal destruction. The weakness of this model is that collaboration seems to be an unnatural act. Libraries have seldom been able to cooperate with each other, let alone publishers. Or can we?

So what will our collection development future be like? Three potential models have been reviewed. I am sure each person who reads this could supply others. Just remember, be careful of what you wish for, you might just get it! 

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tify the right product at the right price.

We briefly reviewed the history of the development of standards for Electronic Data Interchange, considered some of the exceptions and variations that standards need to account for, and examined cost factors that affect decisions to implement EDI. We discussed how the Internet is changing expectations for electronic business transactions; and we considered XML as an emerging solution. By applying object-oriented technology to EDI, XML uses metatags and data type definitions to interpret data structures and improve the functionality of business transactions. XML promises to allow clients to implement EDI with a minimum of effort, thereby reducing costs. Implementation will not occur overnight. The change will be evolutionary rather than revolutionary. As applications get updated and modified with XML code, these solutions will gradually replace older, more cumbersome applications. In the meantime, several companies and organizations have begun to adapt existing standards or to prepare DTDs for use with XML. Others are developing tools to facilitate the transition. 

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Back Talk — Be Careful What You Wish For: Three Alternative Collection Development Visions for Academic Libraries

by **Anthony W. Ferguson** (Associate University Librarian, Columbia University)
Phone: 212-854-7401; Fax: 212-854-9099
<ferguson@columbia.edu>

As we approach the new millennium, I think it is time to think about how we would like to do things differently in the future. At the **Fiesole Retreat** a group of us were asked to discuss what we thought collection development's digital future might be like. I outlined the following three alternatives. The first two are the inventions of others, the third is what I wish might take place. I suggest that as we contemplate the future, we need to remember the old saying "be careful of what you wish for, you might just get it."

Non-Commercial Information Digital Library Model

The first wished-for future I'll call the non-commercial information, digital library model. Like all models, it is an over simplification of reality. Its central feature is its rejection of, and frustration with, the current situation in which research conducted by university scholars is published by commercial and societal publishers and then repurchased by libraries.

The goal of this model is to stop the repurchasing of information and instead capture and share this research using modern forms of telecommunication. The **Los Alamos high energy physics preprint** electronic archive is the poster child of this movement. This model assumes that libraries and universities are interested in scholarly communication and publishers are interested in making money. The relationship between libraries and universities on the one side, and publishers on the other side, is adversarial. If one side wins, the other side loses.

The strength of this model is its simplicity: Money grubbing publishers have created a situation where libraries have too little money to buy too much information. The weakness of this model is its overly simplistic: Not all publishers are profit driven, not all universities are interested in freely sharing information. Today's universities, moreover, are in the money making business themselves, e.g., hospitals bring in upwards of one-third of higher education's revenues. The solution to the central problem identified by this model is the destruction of commercial publishing, or at least those publishers who are seen as the most egregious predators. I believe the

number of adherents to this model is growing. The **SPARC** initiative, designed to replace predatory publishers with friendly publishers, is supposed to be the spark that will set off the revolution that will make this model the dominating paradigm for the new millennium.

Personal Information Spending Account Model

The second digital future vision I will characterize as the personal information spending account revolution. It is the topic of **Professor Malcolm Getz's** paper, "Academic Publishing: Networks and Prices" at the **1999 ACRL conference** in Detroit. Unlike the previous vision, this model acknowledges the reality of commercially published information, but it advocates distributing each university's information dollars to the users themselves and then letting them purchase—an article at a time or a book at a time—what they want, when they want it. The goal is to stop the buying, cataloging, shelving, and preservation of information in anticipation of use. This model assumes such library activities are not only capital intensive, but wasteful. It also assumes that publishers are in the business of selling information and will sell it to libraries in whatever format that libraries require. Basically, in this model, libraries will lead and publishers will follow.

The strength of this model is that it promises to give people what they want and it potentially can radically reduce the costs that universities must pay to meet the information needs of its faculty and students.

The weakness of this model is that it presumes that publishers will follow the lead of the universities and not change how they charge for information. It presumes that publishers will assume the risk that libraries have heretofore taken on when they bought materials without knowing if they would be read. It further presumes that faculty and students will have the equipment and skills to access all of this new digital information. The cumulative weight of all these assumptions, I believe, dooms this model to failure.

Library/University-Publisher Collaboration Model

The third collection development vision which I wish would serve as the foundation of our future I term the library/university-publisher collaboration model. Its central theme is one of both sides working together to achieve each other's goals: Libraries want to provide their users with as broad and deep an array of information as possible and publishers want to cover their costs plus make a profit. This model assumes that neither side is out to destroy the other and that both sides want to help each other.

Successful examples of this model are few and far between—indeed the paranoia of the first model almost precludes belief that this kind of cooperation can take place. However, at the risk of being seen as a Pollyanna, let's look at an example of the sort of thing that **ALMOST** achieves the goals of this model. More than one periodicals publisher of late has agreed to consortial deals where every library pays some additional amount for electronic access in exchange for the ability to look at all of the journals any member of the consortia owns. Further, the library agrees not to cancel their print subscriptions in exchange for agreed upon price increase caps. While many librarians are still uncomfortable with doing this sort of business with the "enemy," it is an example of how the boundaries of "business as usual" can change. The question is, can librarians and publishers collaborate further without either side feeling like World War II "collaborators?"

Another potential example of what could happen would be for a coalition of the major university and trade publishers to work with a coalition of research libraries to develop a "Librarynet.com" sort of digital library for out-of-print books. These are books that are still in demand, but from which publishers have little hope of making more revenue. Together all parties could determine the protocols for entering scanned content, images, etc. Then the participants would contribute to the database and benefit from its use according

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