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# And They Were There

## Reports of Meetings — Professional and Scholarly Publishers Group (PSP) and the EBSCO Executive Seminar

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### *How Smart Are Publishers? A Report on the Annual PSP Meeting in Washington in February*

Report by Anthony Watkinson (Consultant, United Kingdom)  
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The *Professional and Scholarly Publishers Group (PSP)* of the *Association of American Publishers* ([www.pspcentral.org](http://www.pspcentral.org)) has now settled into a routine of holding its annual meeting in Washington at the start of February. Note that this is not one of those meetings that are rigorously STM in orientation and concerned only with the special problems of serials. There is a lot of talk about books of all sorts and indeed “services” which are neither books nor serials. In addition, tweedy university press types, getting prizes for monographs, dominate the PSP awards luncheon though many of them (books and people) were not very visible during the actual sessions. The theme of the conference this year was “smart content — new ways to add value” and though, of course, as is the case with Charleston themes, some sessions were pressed to explain how they fitted in to the overarching concept, on the whole there were a surprisingly large number of presentations on this topic. Apart from those speaking, which this year included **Ann Okerson** and **Brian Schottlaender**, there were very few librarians among the delegates. In a way this is a pity as there are good reasons for finding out how much bigger the check is going to be in the future from a sector which swallows up a lot of library funds. Although some may talk about “bells and whistles” there is little doubt that adding value (for a larger payment) has now been made a respectable offering by the Big Deal. Of course, there is the question of whether funds are finite or can be stretched: this question lurked in the background to many of the talks but was rarely expressed openly. Indeed, the publishing community is currently obsessed by the end-customer with “customization” as a key proposition and there is remarkably little consideration of how libraries fit in or whether indeed they do fit in. In what follows, I have mostly (but not entirely) omitted mention of talks by librarians, which were good but curiously disconnected from the rest of the conference, and presentations concerned from known entities such as **CrossRef**. I have instead concentrated on those developments that were new to me, and especially those that I found difficult to understand.

A typical session was on something called fourth generation content. The blurb in the program did not really explain what is meant in explaining that “companies at the leading edge of professional publishing are finding new ways to integrate content into work processes — providing the ultimate in value-added publishing.” **Scott Grillo** of **McGraw Hill** amplified. The third generation is all about linking. The fourth generation is about linking to “actionable content,” “content when and where you need it.” Three speakers explained what this all indicates in practice. **Bill Detmer** (M.D.) of **Unbound Medicine** (from the **University of Virginia**) puts “slices” on handhelds and links to the Web [see <http://www.unboundmedicine.com>] as part of commitment to next-generation knowledge management systems for health care. The company is concerned with wireless and Web-based technologies but handhelds were the main feature of the presentation. There was some doubt from the floor about handheld technology and he admitted that the slices had to be very small. **Bill Woishnis** of **www.knovel.com** and the book publisher

**William Andrew Inc.** is an apostle of the book. As a working engineer he never used a journal. His message was eBooks and e-reference portals which will bypass the library. Interfaces have to be simple and even more simple for the professional — and interactive. Online graphs are very popular. Only the third speaker **John Lewis Needham**, the content business development director of **Ebrary**, mentioned working with libraries and that was rather in passing. It is good to know that the company is still in business. During 2002, when finances were tight because of the dot.com collapse, they concentrated on selling their technology e.g., to **Primis**. They are now gradually building up their collections and creating liaisons with key publishers. An example is **BMJ Publishing**, where a book series is now or will be available in print, in CD-ROM, on handheld and probably as part of a database. They are also still developing the technology. “Streaming PDF” is particularly interesting, where you can download only the pages wanted rather than the whole file. See <http://www.Ebrary.com>.

There was an interesting session on **Digital Rights Management**. Scholarly and professional publishers do not know what to do with **DRM** and, of course, many other interested parties worry about it a lot. The full title of the session, chaired by **Bob Bolick** of **McGraw Hill**, was Value-Added Digital Rights Management: Lock or Key? The speakers were the lawyer **Glen Secor**, **Bill Rosenblatt**, a technology consultant at the cumbrously named **GiantSteps Media Technology Strategies**, and **Ed Collier** at the **Copyright Clearance Center**. The site <http://www.giantstepsmts.com/> has some interesting material on it relating specifically to **DRM** including **DRM Watch** (<http://www.giantstepsmts.com/drmwatch.htm>) which is described as a summary of news events that affect the world of content rights management and the Internet, along with analysis of their significance in the market. **Secor** ran through the various attacks on the anti-circumvention clauses of the **DCMA** and does not see any threat to its basic provisions. His conclusions are that the legislation is not perfect but it should and probably will be given a chance to work. **Rosenblatt** pointed out that every popular format has been hacked. Only those not interesting enough have not been hacked. Any implementation of strong encryption will cost money and who will pay?

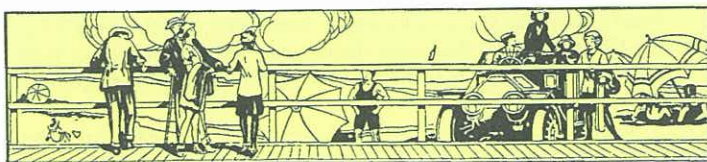
Niche repurposing models represent real growth in the **DRM** market today. Among the new business models are e-facsimiles, online archives, pay per use and superdistribution i.e., pass on under publisher control. Business rights management requires major process reengineering and rationalization and large database and system development. Virtually no publisher has solved this today. What I got out of this session is the message that **DRM** is just around the corner and remains there.

What about the context to this sort of thinking? A guru not previously known to me gave the after dinner oration with **Powerpoint**, the Canadian **Steve Abram** of **Micromedia ProQuest**. The title of the presentation was “Shift Happens” and the nature of the shift is indicated by the following quotes:

- New challenges are hitting our industry faster than a Kansas tornado spins out cows.
- If we do not make strides to understand the big shifts we will create one of the largest generation gaps in history.
- If you do not plant the seeds you will not have a future.

This was one of these talks, which sees the baby boomer generation retiring en masse and then a lot of new people coming in who are radically different and moulded by the Internet. As usual in such claims, there was a certain doubt about which people and when e.g., no-one older than 14 is likely to have been totally immersed in the World Wide Web and they are a little young to take over. That is my view but a gathering of consultants afterwards in the bar round the speaker was uniformly certain that the big change was coming through soon.

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A talk with this title at least since 1999, I found the slides at <http://www.mmlid.com/presentations.aap.pdf>.

OK — we are in for paradigm shift but to what sort of paradigm? Publisher conferences now have an obligatory session on alternative models. There was a balanced panel on whether alternative models add greater value to scientific publishing, tightly chaired by **Nigel Fletcher-Jones** of **Nature America Inc.** One end of the spectrum was represented by **Pieter Bolman** of **Elsevier**, who is ubiquitous nowadays, and the other by **Jean-Claude Guedon**. **Guedon's** thesis is best read up in <http://www.arl.org/arl/proceedings/138/guedon.html>. He added nothing new. The really interesting talk was by **Ann Wolpert**, who, as many will know, runs not only the library at **MIT** but **MIT Press** and **Dspace** too. This gives her a special perspective. Some of her comments are given below:

- Librarians and publishers have become like ships passing in the night. There are no clear demarcation lines or aims.
- Libraries are owned by the institution. Most publishers are not.
- Publishers aim to maximise revenue while librarians aim to manage costs.
- What libraries cannot do with licensed content is a big problem for them, which publishers do not seem to always realise.
- Both publishers and libraries serve academic authors and their ideas.
- Why do publishers want to archive digital content?
- Education cannot sustain the cost models that publishers would like them to.

I think many readers of *ATG* from all parts of the information chain will empathize with these bullets. One final information point. **Wolpert** does not know how **Dspace** will develop. It is in the hands of faculty as so much is. Currently faculty are putting gray literature up there but **MIT Press** has put up 100 OP books and they are getting the most hits — even though they are not easy to find! See <https://hpds1.mit.edu/handle/1721.1/1787>.

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### 15th Annual EBSCO Executive Seminar, "Reassessment of Bundled Subscriptions to Electronic Journals," Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, January 26, 2003

Report by **Rosann Bazirjian** (Assistant Dean for Technical & Access Services, Penn State University)  
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The *EBSCO Executive Seminar*, held on January 26, 2003, marked the 15<sup>th</sup> year of this series. The topic was "Reassessment of Bundled Subscriptions to Electronic Journals." **Mary Case**, Director, Office of Scholarly Communication, Association of Research Libraries, focused on trends. **Tom Sanville**, Executive Director of **OhioLink**, discussed the benefits. **Nancy Eaton**, Dean of Libraries, The Pennsylvania State University Libraries, spoke of concerns and long-term implications of bundled subscriptions.

**Mary Case** said that libraries are severely affected by our downturn in the economy, and the large deficits caused by September 11, 2001, corporate account scandals, and the looming threat of war. Aggregated packages remain a good deal for libraries, but as our licenses expire, we are now faced with what to do in these troubling economic times. She questioned what publishers can do to increase their income while libraries struggle to maintain spending levels. **Ms. Case** suggested that in order to increase revenue bases, publishers may move to all electronic and eliminate paper. This presents a problem for libraries since archiving and interlibrary loan issues have not yet been resolved. **Ms. Case** warned that we are "in for a bumpy ride" as long as publishers aim to keep their profits in the double digits.

**Tom Sanville** spoke about the benefits of bundled packages, but warned that libraries must consider usage and economics in combination. He indicated that libraries have already made all of the "tough

After a long search, which reveals that **Mr. Abram** has been giving

decisions" about what titles they need to retain in their collections. Cancellations come only after great duress. Historically, libraries spend more money each year, but subscribe to fewer and fewer titles. This is a long term "unsustainable situation."

Bundled licenses have improved the purchasing power of **OhioLink Libraries**. They are successful at keeping cost increases under greater control since they use their group buying power as a single buying unit. **Mr. Sanville** feels that he has found the evolutionary path to sustainability. He has seen greatly expanded title use and indicates that the large group dynamics of **OhioLink** gives them the feeling of "safety in numbers." Heaviest use is concentrated in few titles, which is not necessarily bad when **OhioLink's** economic model is taken into account. For **OhioLink**, this has become a good and solid business approach.

**Nancy Eaton** indicated that her presentation will present the topic from the perspective of a very large academic library. She reminded the audience that aggregated services did not come out of the "ether." Much of it came from requests by libraries to publishers. She also indicated that she was surprised that bulk pricing has not been looked at as part of aggregation. She said that libraries have and do affect marketplace and product development, and that they must continue to serve that role.

**Ms. Eaton** focused on the problems we are facing with data and statistics. Librarians continue to ask for better data on journal usage, and **Penn State** is developing a data warehouse to help analyze statistics and make better purchasing decisions. She feels that the results of the **E-Metrics Project** were disappointing as it concluded that there was no basis for commonality in vendor reported statistics. She said that we need to create trend data within our own institutions.

**Ms. Eaton** said she had some major concerns that she wanted to express to the audience, the first being the restrictions to ILL that are written into many of our licenses. There are also restrictions on alumni usage. She said that this dictates a new service pattern that our users resent. She also argued for better authentication systems that break apart locations and user demand.

**Ms. Eaton** believes that new approaches to scholarly communication will have an impact on aggregators. Open archives initiatives could change the dynamics, as well as Websites, such as **Columbia's CIAO**, that combine journals, preprints, proceedings, data, listservs, and courseware. These sites combine content and use of content, and this could have an effect on aggregators. She also cited a **CIC** digitization project on Native Americans which will pair libraries as repositories with academic faculty. If these types of projects take off, the aggregation issue could be short term.

After a question and answer period with the three speakers, the audience enjoyed a lovely, low-keyed reception hosted by **EBSCO** at the magnificent **Pyramid Club** in Philadelphia. The speakers provided the basis upon which informal discussion flourished atop the 52<sup>nd</sup> floor. 🦉



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## Books Are Us

Column Editor: **Anne Robichaux** (Professor Emerita, Medical University of South Carolina; Consultant, Majors Scientific Books)  
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*Column Editor's Note: This column covers fictitious accounts of people in our industry — librarians, publishers, vendors, booksellers, etc. — people like us. All contributions, comments, suggestions are welcome. — AR*

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**Adriana Trigiani** introduces a librarian in her Big Stone gap series, and includes the character in all three books: *Big Stone Gap: A Novel* (Ballentine Books, trade paper, April, 2001, ISBN: 0345438329); *Big Cherry Hollar* (Ballentine Books, paperback, March 2002, ISBN: 0345445848); and *Milk Glass Moon: A Big Stone Gap Novel* (Random House, 2002 ISBN: 0375506187).

There are many reviews, primarily positive, for these three novels on [continued on page 83](http://www.against-the-grain.com)