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Back Talk -- Profession Confusion

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expensive title in the selection. The cost per use of the cheapest title was eight times higher.

The costs of using **Emerald** and **IOPP** journals were assessed by aggregating all 2002 online revenue (from site licences, consortium deals and pay-per-view traffic on their Websites), and 50 per cent of the revenue from their "traditional" journal subscriptions (both offer online access as well as the printed copies). The total was divided by the number of downloads:

Publisher	Total Downloads	Average Price Per Use	
		GBP £	USD \$
Emerald	3,062,502	3.43	5.46
IOPP	3,093,655	2.88	4.58

Given the changing nature of the academic library market as the usage of electronic information increases at the expense of print, the conclusions that one may draw from these figures can only be tentative. Nevertheless, they are echoed by a case study undertaken at **Drexel University** in Philadelphia (**Montgomery & King**, "Comparing Library and User Related Costs of Print and Electronic Journal Collections – A First Step Towards a Comprehensive Analysis," *D-Lib Magazine* 8:10, 2002).

Benefits of Electronic Delivery to the Library and Its Readers

Libraries benefit from the move to electronic delivery of journal literature. They avoid the costs of binding printed journal issues each year. The need for additional space in the library is reduced. Access is not dependent on library opening hours or location. And library staff can be redeployed on professional duties by discontinuing the manual handling inherent in check-in, reshelving, repairs and processing interlibrary loan requests.

Within the consortium that uses its collective purchasing power, individual libraries benefit. Duplication within and between collections is eliminated. The consortium in Victoria, Australia, **CAVAL**, found that an analysis of duplicate serials within the academic libraries in Victoria revealed considerable overlap. Half the journals were being held in three libraries or more. Of the 4,000 titles that were held on paid subscription, 1,953 titles, or roughly half, were available in electronic form.

Readers benefit in that they can access journals on campus or remotely, whatever the time or day. The literature is delivered to the desktop. Moreover, readers have been found to spend much less time locating and obtaining library-provided articles when they are available electronically.

Measuring True Value

The first systematic analysis of the organisational impact of the migration to electronic journals is the case study at **Drexel University** by **Montgomery & King**. The study analysed operational cost savings at **Drexel**, which has moved to a journal collection that is now predominantly electronic. It examined the costs of space, systems, services, supplies and staff and allocated them separately to unbound print journals (i.e., current issues), bound journal volumes and electronic journals.

The study reveals the contrast between the unit cost of printed journals and of electronic journals, particularly at the level of cost per use. Based on **Drexel's** holdings, it found that the library's operational cost of providing a single "use" of a journal article was as low as \$0.45 for electronic journals; this contrasted with \$6.00 for current (unbound) issues and a staggering \$30.00 for bound journals.

Interpreting these figures is fraught with difficulty. The study was conducted in the absence of agreed standards on the definition and compilation of such usage data. Nevertheless, big differences in operational costs are significant.

The Need for Standards

Measuring the use of online information needs to be done in a more agreed on and consistent way. Both publishers and their customers want to know how information is being used. But to be meaningful, the recording and reporting of online usage data must be done according to international standards. **Project COUNTER** ("Counting Online Usage of Networked Electronic Resources") released a **Code of Practice** on January 14, 2003, that specifies and defines the data elements involved,

Brain Research, an **Elsevier** journal that happened to be the most

and the format, delivery, frequency and granularity of output reports with respect to journals and databases. It defines how remote usage of institutionally licensed products can be measured. It also specifies the methods by which direct usage reports and those from intermediaries (gateways, aggregators and electronic delivery vendors) may be combined. The significance of **COUNTER** is that it is a genuinely international effort, widely supported by librarians, subscription agents and other intermediaries, and publishers, as well as their professional organizations.

What Does this Mean for Publishers?

Comparing just two publishers out of the many scholarly journal publishers may lead to conclusions that are unsupportable. The available evidence, nevertheless, strongly indicates that electronic journals provide significant cost advantages in two major respects:

- Publishers can deliver their journal literature electronically at a lower cost per use than in print, and
- Libraries incur greater operating costs in dealing with readers' requests for printed journals than they do for the electronic equivalent.

Taken with the evidence of increased convenience to the reader and greater effectiveness of the library service, the electronic journal provides incomparably enhanced value for money when compared with the traditional printed volume or issue. This presents publishers with a challenge. Libraries, beset by budget problems, inevitably focus on price. They use measuring devices such as **ISI's Impact Factor** and will undoubtedly use their own usage data as factors in assessing the importance of monograph or journal information to their faculty and students; when renewals come around, the price of the journal will be a major factor in acquisition or cancellation decisions. Publishers face the challenge of convincing librarians that price and value are not necessarily the same thing, and that their decisions should be based on the utility of the information as much as price. This is a marketing challenge to be grasped immediately.

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Reference

How often do you hear, "Where can I find information on...?" The **Infography** (in-FOG-ra-fy) hopes to help answer that question. Scholars, 93% of whom are professors, submit bibliographies of the best sources for various subjects. Each bibliography includes six "superlative" sources for the topic as well as other good sources. Citations most often include books and journal articles, but include online sources as well. The site has simple and advanced search options with a good help page. Note that broader search terms seem to glean better results: for example, a search for "cancer" yielded 14 results ranging from "amphibian population decline" to "radon" to "sweeteners;" a search for "leukemia" yielded only one response "HTLV-1, Transformation of Human T-Cells." Of course, the variety of topics is limited by the range of bibliographies received, and many topics may not be covered. How great would it be, though, to be able to say to a patron, "I have a list of the best sources for your topic right here." (**Wendy E. Wood, Virginia College at Austin**) — <http://www.infography.com>

Sometimes even the best search algorithm produces a plethora of hits that must be sifted through for useful results. **Vivismo**, a company which markets search engine enhancements, offers free demos of a clustering tool which neatly parses results from **PubMed** and dozens of other corporate, government, news, university, and other information sources into subtopic folders. Although the demo is limited to 200 hits, it may nevertheless save you and your patrons a lot of time, at least while it is still offered. The company also offers demos on its Enterprise Publisher and Content Integrator products. — vivismo.com/ <http://vivismo.com/demo/Overview.html>

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lieve, this will define what a librarian is and we won't have to feel embarrassed to be one.

Back Talk — Profession Confusion

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It seems to me that we seem to be having another attack of profession confusion at just the wrong time. I was recently at an international meeting of librarians all of whom share an organizational affiliation that had the dreaded L word in it: Librarians. The outcome was to change the name of the organization to be an "Information Services Group." While in North America I visited a major university and looked over the plans for its wonderful new library addition but which would be called a "Learning Centre." Coming home to Hong Kong I had a stack of journals to go through and right at the top was the November 1, 2003 issue of *Library Journal* (volume 128, issue 18) with two articles by **John Berry III** about the need for the MLS: "Protect Professionalism," and "It's a great idea to put humanities Ph.D.s to work in libraries... But Don't Call 'em 'Librarians.'"

I don't bring these examples up to condemn the people associated with these actions. Actually, I understand the kiss of death that the L word can mean to some projects where the decision makers want to distance themselves from the expenditures' black hole that *ies represent. It seems administrators are willing to give money to a new black hole but not the old one. And, of course, it is not hip to be a *arian when we mainly spend our time with digital everything. As the president of the **Hong Kong Library Association**, an organization that denies membership to non-graduate library science graduates unless they serve a probationary sentence in the library of their choice, I can't help but feel a bit guilty myself for worrying about such things. Of course, I have also hired a few non MLS'er librarians so I am obviously professionally confused as well.

My concern is that we are once again beating ourselves in public over issues of small consequence compared to the enormity of the problems that are very large on our horizons. In the November/December issue of *Online*, an interesting article is entitled "The Information Industry Revolution: Implications for Librarians."

The author, **George R. Plosker**, reports on an experience he had at the **Special Librarians Association** meeting talking about the roles of libraries and librarians. Regarding the need for libraries to market themselves to their publics, he noted

With the pervasiveness of Open Web search engines and super bookstores, the profession is simply not adequately or effectively communicating the value of libraries, library resources, and the librarian. (p. 18)

I suppose the ongoing desire of many to go to war with publishers is a conscious or unconscious attempt to communicate our value. We object to having library budgets used to pay for tenure and grant recruitment (our teachers publish and get research grants on the basis of publication in the journals whose publishers we hate) and so we support library friendly publishers and try to organize boycotts of other publishers. But I have an idea that the message will be lost on most university administrators.

Others among us become **Google'arians**, seeking to help students become superior Web searchers. Others go in the other direction and declare that everything on the Web is of low quality and that only the full text databases from the publishers we hate are of value.

So what do I think we should be doing? I agree with **Plosker** — let's work directly on communicating to those who matter the value of libraries and librarians. I will now use the B world: branding. Universities in North America, as discussed in a January 3, 2003 *Chronicle of Higher Education* article entitled "The Wannabes," have discovered a self-evident truth: "If you want to improve research and need private money to do it... then you have to go national" (statement made by **Diane D. Craig**, research director at the Center for Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences at the **University of Florida**). And to go national means getting your brand out there. In another *Chronicle* article, "Romancing the Brand," the author **John**

L. Pulley, discusses the experiences of the **University of Maryland** which, after some very aggressive branding work, showed significant progress in getting their message out there. The GPA of incoming students increased from 3.01 to 3.75, SAT scores for incoming freshmen increased from 1173 to 1246, and applications for these students increased by 24.7 percent at **Maryland** since they began their efforts to improve and promote their brand name recognition.

Saying what should be done is easier than doing it. Recently, some of my staff and I spent a couple of hours with a member of our Friends organization, who is both a lawyer and a marketing specialist, talking about what we can do to increase the amount of funds we raise and how to get the attention of University administrators so that we can slow down budget cuts and speed up the planning for a new library. His message to us was the need to get brand name recognition which he said was shorthand for getting them to understand our value using a few simple words. He noted that **Nike** didn't need to provide long reports on the value of their shoes in order to get customer support. Customers recognize the value and so they support Nike with their wallets. He suggested that we needed to take whatever actions needed to enable patrons and university administrators to agree with the following three statements upon hearing the word "library" (or learning center or information resource service): This is a good thing. I want to support it. I believe in it.

He suggested that we first needed to make sure that we understood what they wanted so that we could meet these needs. To do this he suggested we need to analyze their aspirations and fears and then figure out how we can help them achieve these aspirations and to help them destroy the forces which oppose them. When that happens, he suggested, we have an ally who will say "this is a good thing, I want to support it, and I believe in it" when they think about libraries. At that point we can also bring to their attention the other things that we do which might not have occurred to them immediately as important when we sought to understand their needs. Library programs, after all, have evolved over time to meet the needs of disparate groups of users, but we and our users may have lost track of why things like authority control are important. Brands, he suggested, usually also have slogans or tag words, like *The Real Thing*, *We Try Harder*, etc., associated with brand name. To get these one needs to think about the adjectives we wish our patrons and decisions makers might ascribe to us, e.g., digital, user friendly, responsive, etc., and then, of course, take actions to make these qualities a reality.

So that is where we are here on the banks of the South China Sea. We are busy working on the above two tasks. I'll let you know in the future how we are doing. But in the meantime we'll do less talking about who can or cannot be a librarian, the evils of this or that publisher, and we'll devote more energy to understanding and meeting user needs. In the end, I be-

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