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Into the Twenty-first Century: Leadership and the Future of Libraries: A Conversation with Robert Wedgeworth

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COUNTER: from page 46

The benefits of full COUNTER membership include:

- The right to vote at the Annual General Meeting on the direction and management of COUNTER, including the appointment of the Board of Directors
- Regular bulletins on the progress of COUNTER
- Advice on implementation of COUNTER
- For vendors, inclusion on the Register of COUNTER-compliant vendors at no additional charge (provided the vendor meets the auditing requirements for compliance.)

As a lower-price alternative to the above, non-voting affiliate membership is available to libraries at £100 (\$150) for 2004. Library affiliates will receive the regular member bulletins on the progress of COUNTER. An application form for Counter membership is available on the COUNTER Website (www.ProjectCounter.org).

Objective 5: Promote membership of COUNTER

Following incorporation of Counter Online Metrics in August 2003, we launched a campaign to attract all categories of members. By the end of October over 60 members had signed up, which means that we are already almost half way towards our target for the whole of 2004. The membership campaign will continue through 2003 and 2004. The more members we have, the more resources we can make available and the faster will be our progress towards extending to Code of Practice to cover more categories of content.

Objective 6: Widespread implementation by vendors for the 2004 subscription year

By publishing Release 1 of the Code of Practice in January 2003, we intended that this would allow vendors time to achieve Counter compliant status by the beginning of the 2004 subscription year. An up-to-date list of compliant vendors is provided on the COUNTER Website, but by October 2003, eight vendors (Annual Reviews, Blackwell, Elsevier, Gale, Oxford University Press, Portland Press, Swets Blackwell and Thomson ISI) and one supplier of online platforms (Atypen Information Systems) were compliant with Release 1. Many other vendors, including the American Institute of Physics, EBSCO, HighWire Press, and the Nature Publishing Group have declared their intention to be COUNTER compliant before the end of 2003.

Looking Ahead

Three major objectives have already been agreed upon for COUNTER in 2004.

First, we plan to publish Release 2 of the Code of Practice early in 2004 with a view to implementing it in January 2005. This means that Release 1 remains valid until January 2005 and will be the required compliance standard until then. Second, we will continue to build the membership of COUNTER, to ensure the initiative's long-term future. Third, the number of COUNTER-compliant vendors will be increased.

Counter Founding Sponsors

COUNTER is deeply grateful to its Founding Sponsors, listed at <http://www.projectcounter.org/sponsors.html>, whose generous financial contributions have enabled this project to commence its work. We salute their vision, commitment and support.

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Into the Twenty-first Century: Leadership and the Future of Libraries

A Conversation with Robert Wedgeworth

by Victoria Beatty, MLIS (Special Projects Librarian, University of Washington Libraries) <vbeatty@u.washington.edu>
<http://faculty.washington.edu/vbeatty/>

Robert Wedgeworth is president of ProLiteracy Worldwide; former interim president and vice chairman of the Laubach Literacy International Board of Trustees; retired university librarian and professor of library administration at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; former dean of the School of Library Service at Columbia University; former executive director of the American Library Association (ALA); chairman of the Committee on Accreditation, ALA (2003-2004); former president of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions; trustee, Newberry Library, Chicago; trustee, Wabash College; board of directors, NY Center for the Book; advisory board, Syracuse University, School of Information Studies; initiated the organization of The National Coalition for Literacy; editor of two major reference works, *ALA Yearbook, 1976-1985* and the *World Encyclopedia of Library and Information Services*, 3d edition, 1993; co-author of *Starvation of Young Black Minds: The Effects of the Book Boycotts in South Africa*, 1989; A.B., Wabash College;

M.S., University of Illinois; five honorary doctorates, the most recent from William and Mary in 1988.

Victoria Beatty received her MLIS in June 2003 from the Information School at the University of Washington. She is currently Special Projects Librarian at the University of Washington Libraries. She has been studying the American Library Association's Library of the Future exhibit at the Century 21 Exposition, better known as the 1962 Seattle World's Fair. The exhibit, which was called *Library 21*, was meant to serve as a working model of twenty-first century library facilities and services. The exhibit's forward-looking designers predicted the integration of new technologies and a blend of library and information sciences that looks surprisingly fresh forty years later. Library leaders used *Library 21* as a catalyst for creating a new paradigm and setting a dynamic new course for the profession. Because the specially trained librarians who staffed the exhibit spread its message to an international network of colleagues, the exhibit had a much greater impact than its six-

month run during the Fair would indicate. Today, as our profession faces similar challenges, the accomplishments of those far-seeing people take on new meaning and inspire us to take up the torch that is passed.

This interview took place on May 12, 2003.

VB: You were one of the lucky librarians who staffed *Library 21*, ALA's Library of the Future exhibit at the 1962 World's Fair in Seattle. You had just graduated from library school and had your first job at the Kansas City Public Library. Is that correct?

RW: Yes. I had started in January 1961. I had just been there a little over a year, when the opportunity came to apply to the *Library 21* staff. My boss at that time was a former treasurer of ALA, and I got him to sponsor me as a candidate.

VB: Could you tell me how you came to be a librarian in the first place?

RW: Well, it's not completely clear to me, but there are some signs that are indicative. I started working as a library page when I was fourteen. I worked in a branch of the Kansas

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Public Library, which was in my high school, and I started working in the summers. I worked two summers as a library page. Let me see, that was after my freshman year, sophomore year...maybe. I'm not sure, but I worked a couple of summers. And then I had to get a summer job that paid more money.

But I went back to it in college. I worked in the college library my entire four years — a part-time job just to earn spending money. (I had scholarships to pay for room and board, tuition.) But my college librarian started talking to me about a career as a librarian. When I was a senior he actually took me down to **Indiana University**, and also over to the **University of Illinois** to interview at the Library school, and I made the decision that I wanted to go to Illinois.

When I think back on it, I had always had very positive images of the librarians that I had met. They were all knowledgeable, impressive people going back to the children's librarian at my branch of the **Kansas City Public Library**. So it sounded like a reasonable career to pursue. Of course, at that time I wasn't as aware as I was later of all the negative images that were around about librarians. Those didn't make any sense to me, because I had personal knowledge of people I worked with over the years.

VB: *I always like to hear people's library stories...what their initial experiences were. It seems like people usually have really good library stories to tell, often going back to their childhoods...So you applied for Library 21....*

RW: I thought it was an interesting opportunity, and I had never been to the Northwest before, and so I applied and was accepted, and I worked six weeks at the **Fair**.

VB: *Which six weeks were you there?*

RW: The best six weeks in the summer in Seattle!

VB: *Ah, July and August!*

RW: Because people kept telling me it wasn't typical...July and August...

VB: *Seattle is known as the Rainy City, but in July and August it becomes the Emerald City... When you went, were you interested in Library 21's emphasis on information technologies? Was that one of the things that attracted you?*

RW: That was one of the things that attracted me. It was the training that stood out in my mind over the years...not the **Fair** itself, but the training that **Joe Becker** and **Dr. Hayes** provided.

VB: *Joseph Becker was one of the primary planners of Library 21, and Robert Hayes was an information scientist who taught an intensive week-long introduction to information systems to each group of librarians staffing the exhibit. Becker and Hayes went on to write the book on library information technology — literally! Their 1963 text, Information Storage and Retrieval: Tools, Elements, Theories, was the very first textbook on the subject. Was the class taught by both Becker and Hayes?*

RW: He and **Dr. Hayes** did the training. It

was my introduction to systems analysis. It wasn't the exposure to computer programming and the knowledge of computers that excited me — it was the introduction to systems analysis. It was another tool for understanding problems. That's what interested me the most.

VB: *Which part of Library 21 did you work in?*

RW: I worked with the computer: the information retrieval systems and the **UNIVAC** system.

VB: *Oh, so you were in the cool part.*

RW: Well, I guess you could say that, looking back on it, although the only real division of labor that I recall was that of the children's librarians. I think we rotated throughout the exhibit. I worked with the teaching machines, and around the area where the mockup of the satellite system was displayed. But mostly I spent my time working with the information retrieval system and the **UNIVAC** computer.

VB: *Well, it was all cool, wasn't it?*

RW: It was exciting to be at the **Fair** and to see new technologies that would become common in libraries within a decade...

VB: *Tell me more about the UNIVAC computer!*

RW: What we were doing was introducing people to the information retrieval system itself, with the *Encyclopedia Britannica* content. The computer was programmed to only do three things. Based on simple retrieval language — you could enter queries like love...war... — it would retrieve quotations from *Great Books of the Western World*, and it could provide gazetteer information on about ninety countries. Then there was another feature that would give you a bibliography — all based on *Great Books* and the gazetteer information.

But what was exciting about it (and if I recall correctly, the **Science Pavilion** was the most popular exhibit at the **Fair**), our exhibit attracted more people than any other single exhibit. And, as I recall, the reason for it was that there were two unique things we had. One was that most of the general public had never seen a computer printout. They would go away with this piece of computer paper... They could go into the exhibit and get a computer printout based on a query they would make, and they would go away with it and tell their friends. And the other thing that was completely new was the **Xerox 914** copier.

VB: *That was the first office copier to make copies on plain paper...*

RW: Many people had never seen copying on plain paper. It was rather slow, by today's standards, but those were the two unique features that I think attracted so many. People would come, and then they would go away and tell their friends about it, and then they would come.

VB: *I heard that people would come back again and again.*

RW: Yes, the traffic was heavy!

VB: *Another new idea had to do with the possibilities that global telecommunications would open up...*

RW: And the interesting thing was that we

didn't know, really, what a satellite system was really like. So what we had was a globe that had pins in it, and there were silken threads strung between them to simulate a satellite communications system around the world.

VB: *I saw pictures of that globe, and I knew that it was somehow associated with satellite communications. And, of course, Telstar was launched during the time the Fair was open, and relayed the first global television broadcast!*

RW: Within a decade we were communicating by satellite. The interesting thing about it was that we called it the Library of the Future, but my assessment was that within ten years every major feature of that exhibit was reasonably well known throughout the country. We said it would be the twenty-first century, but it didn't take more than a decade for most of those features to get introduced.

VB: *Tell me more about the training course and your experience with Bob Hayes and Joseph Becker.*

RW: That's exactly what was exciting about it to me. **Joe Becker** was impressive because of his experience working with the Pentagon and a number of defense companies on the West Coast...that experience was impressive. But it was **Bob Hayes'** ability to convey complex information in very simple terms that really endeared him to us, because he not only introduced us to applications but also to how to think about what computers could do for the library field. So, in that sense, the systems analysis part was more important than what he taught us about computers — because, of course, computer knowledge was pretty rudimentary and in a few years had been made completely obsolete. The basic principles, of course, persisted. But the equipment we were looking at and talking about was obsolete within a very short period of time. So what persisted was the introduction to systems analysis...and then I took additional courses in systems analysis after I came back from **Library 21**.

VB: *Gordon Martin, the Library 21 project director, wrote in his report on the exhibit that "the influence that specially trained, enthusiastic librarians will have cannot be assessed precisely, but the potential is large."*

RW: What would be an interesting story would be to follow the careers of people who got that training. I can tell you, just from anecdotal evidence, that many of them became leaders in the field. There were a significant number of us who had that training, who became that first generation of librarians who introduced computers into libraries.

VB: *I have already heard some of these stories, because a lot of people wrote about their experiences at Library 21. All of them really focus on Bob Hayes' training program.*

RW: It was an eye-opener.

VB: *I'm interested in Library 21 because what I'm really interested in is: Just what is the future of libraries and librarianship?*

RW: Follow the people. Follow the people. The **Fair** is interesting, but that's not the story. The people represent the story.

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I wasn't as aware of it as I am now, but through all of [my career] you can see the influence that I took with me, because I made an entire career out of going into problem situations and solving problems. I was very fortunate: a background in technical services has been extremely helpful in my career, because I understood the way that libraries worked — the inner mechanisms that brought collections to people and allowed people to identify materials that they wanted. And I think that fundamental knowledge persisted throughout my career.

I didn't realize this until shortly before I retired, when I looked back and I saw that every job after I left Kansas City was a job where I went to solve some problem or some set of problems.

VB: Another area in which *Library 21* was ahead of the curve was in its emphasis on co-operation and networking.

RW: That was a very strong emphasis. And, for example, at **IFLA [International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions]** we understood immediately that libraries could not replicate the libraries in developed countries. But we found that libraries in developing countries could use technology to leapfrog, first by getting them connected.

VB: Tell me more about that.

RW: I was aware that UNESCO had taken a look at the possibility of putting a basic collection of scientific journals in every developing country. And when they looked at it and found how much it would cost, they had to back away. The cost was enormous...

And what I concluded from that was that we were not going to be able to replicate libraries in developed countries; we had to find a way to leapfrog over some of those developmental stages to really share and bring the developing countries into the broader library world. And technology was the way to do that. But in order to start that, you had to get them connected.

That was the stimulus for **IFLANET**; because once you got them connected you could begin to share information on all kinds of things. But without that connection, you couldn't really do it. Here again at **IFLA**, I installed new technologies for managing the association. As I had done at **ALA**, I reorganized the finances and balanced the **IFLA** budget, made **IFLA** more prosperous, and then it went on from there.

So the kinds of things I've done in other situations are very similar. The way I describe it is: I have spent my career making institutions and organizations perform better.

VB: Your career has had a substantial international focus. Did that begin with the *World's Fair* as well?

RW: No, the *Library 21* exhibit had almost no international content.

VB: Aside from the global telecommunications exhibit and the children's area?

RW: The children's area was a multicultural experience, and people came to visit the Fair from all over the world, but the exhibit itself did

not have any special international emphasis. No, it was very simple. From the very beginning of my career, I started out in technical services: acquisitions cataloging. And I was fascinated with the acquisition of foreign materials, and so I specialized in that area. I wasn't into international librarianship [then]; I was interested in the foreign book trade.

VB: I thought I would ask you about your ideas about globalization, because you are probably in one of the best positions to have a global perspective.

RW: I wrote an article about it a few years ago...

VB: Was it published in *Kathleen de la Peña McCook's book, Libraries: Global Reach, Local Touch*?

RW: I wrote it for that book. We already have the global library field: interconnected, cooperative in many ways — and it will continue to develop in that way. It will still be subject to economics and politics, because there are still areas that cannot afford to be involved, where they can't afford to provide access to information. There are still other areas where they can afford it, but where the politics prevent them from doing it.

VB: Yes, I wanted to ask you about your experiences in South Africa.

RW: I had been introduced to the South African situation by the booksellers, when I first started going to the **Frankfurt Book Fair**. These were English booksellers, and they were telling me that they were selling books to the [South African] government to be used in areas where the Black population lived. But they would go back the next year and the books were stored away in a closet, because they had no librarians. And they asked me if we had some material at **ALA** that would help allow them to organize libraries with the use of nonprofessionals.

We had had some [of these materials] in the earlier part of the twentieth century, but we had gone well beyond that. We didn't even have those materials any more. I think they got some from the Brits that were still using them. But anyway, that made me generally acquainted with what was happening in South Africa.

Then I went to South Africa under the old apartheid system when the book boycott was on — the cultural boycott. I did a study for the **Fund for Free Expression**, in conjunction with the **Association of American Publishers**, and that gave me more in-depth knowledge of what was going on.

Then, when I became **IFLA** president, my objective was to try to bring the South Africans into **IFLA**, because South Africa is really the key to being able to build stronger library communities in the southern part of the continent. But you needed a strong South Africa, since South Africa is divided. Over the years, I was able to encourage, persuade, criticize, cajole, and get the South African libraries to come together in one nonracial association, which they finally did in 1998.

VB: What a story!

RW: They were readmitted to **IFLA**, and they got the basis for building a really strong

national library system there. So that, in a nutshell, is what I did in South Africa. I've done a few things, mostly just to try to help move things along.

VB: I'm tremendously interested in this whole idea of international involvement, because of some of the reading and thinking and wondering I've been doing about what is the library of the future... And I've run into things like the **Helsinki Public Library**, for example...

RW: Yes, that was one of my former students.

VB: *Maija Berndtson?*

RW: Yes. She was one of my students at Chicago, when I was **ALA** Executive Director and I taught part time at the **University of Chicago**.

VB: How about that!

RW: Yes. She said that I gave her her first real excitement about what it might mean to be a librarian.

VB: And then I came along and read about her, and read some of the things she wrote, and then I got excited... So...from you — to her — to me. That's so fantastic!

RW: But also she was fortunate in that the Finnish government did something that I thought was extraordinary. The Minister of Finance decided that they needed... (they have a huge land area and a small population scattered about...) ...a way to be able to tie that population together. So they wanted to give broad public access to communications, to the Internet — and they chose to do that through libraries (as one of the primary ways of giving public access to the Internet). That really helped the **Helsinki Public Library** to develop systems that they have now. **Maija** is quite talented, and she has done a tremendous job.

VB: What do you see as the future of libraries (if you look ahead, say fifty years from now)?

RW: If you look at information services, what you see is that people are overwhelmed by information. There is a lot more information out there than people can understandably analyze and interpret, in terms of their own needs and interests. So we've got to make some advances in more precise systems for retrieving information.

Right now, there has not been much progress in the technology of the reference search, whether you're on the Internet or anywhere else. You're still sending out an object to try to identify similar objects and bring them back. The problem is that if it's a broad field, it brings back more than you can actually use. So that's an old-fashioned technology, and we've got to find a way to do better than that.

What I'm talking about is the creation of new forms of searching than what we know now, and it's probably going to be a combination of mathematics and philosophy that will bring us to that. That work has yet to be done.

The counterpoint to that is that we need to be able to design information services that are more specific to people: the technology of searching and understanding more precisely the characteristics of library users is an area that we haven't given much attention.

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We spent the whole of the twentieth century building major collections and building major systems to organize those collections and make them available. And, I think, in the foreseeable future, we've got to concentrate on being more precise about methods for searching and understanding more precisely the characteristics of the people that we want to serve.

Right now, most librarians get very little training in that. The ones that do are the children's librarians, who understand precisely the needs of a four-year-old (as distinct from the needs of a seven- or eight-year-old) and who apply that knowledge daily to match those kids with the kind of information that will be useful to them and also consistent with their needs and interests. People who serve adults and undergraduates don't get that kind of training, so mostly it's a hit-or-miss thing for us. So we can do a better job of matching their information needs and interests with what is available to them.

You asked me what I thought the future was

going to be like... I think the future is going to be pretty much like what the past has been, with a continuing emphasis on these technological systems, and more and more emphasis on the Internet.

VB: Can you comment on the impact of globalization?

RW: That's hard to predict, because that's going to be primarily subject to economics and politics. Access to information will continue to improve, more slowly in some societies than in others — especially in societies where you have religion as a controlling factor, where the object there is not to give people access to lots of information but to control what people think.

VB: Your career has been meteoric, and it's still going strong! Would you like to offer any advice to librarians just beginning their careers?

RW: My advice to young librarians is to get to be knowledgeable, get involved, and write for publication. Pursue the topics that are of interest to you, research them, and write about them.

VB: Thank you! This has been very inspiring...

RW: Thank you for calling.

VB: ...and I appreciate it.

RW: It's been a pleasure. Good luck to you.

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ATG Interviews Daniel P. Halloran

(President, Blackwells Book Services, Inc.) <Dan.Halloran@Blackwell.com>

by Katina Strauch (Editor, *Against the Grain*) <kstrauch@comcast.net>

ATG: Give us specifics about the sale of Everett's to Blackwell's. These are two companies with a long history in the book and serials business. How will organizational structure, personnel, and services change?

DPH: Colin Harrison from Everett's and I have worked together for almost ten years. It started out as a strategic relationship when I owned Academic Book Center and developed into a personal as well as professional relationship over the years. Colin and I kept in contact even after my move to Blackwell's. So it was no surprise when Colin approached me earlier this year with the idea of Blackwell's purchasing the bookselling operations of Everett's.

Colin represented not just his own interest but that of the other shareholders and they asked several booksellers to bid. Although Blackwell's bid was not the highest, Colin felt that Blackwell's would retain the largest amount of business and continue with the high standards he and the Everett's staff had developed. We feel honored to be chosen to carry on the proud Everett's tradition and will do everything possible to maintain that reputation.

The operations have been successfully consolidated into our operations in Oxford. Colin will work with us for the next year to insure that all goes as smoothly as possible and that we fully understand the details of each customer. Colin will also be joining us in San Diego for the ALA meeting.

A limited number of staff, primarily from the Everett's exhibition business, Granta, have moved to Blackwell's.

ATG: We understand that Academic Book Center will be totally absorbed by Blackwell's as of January 1, 2004. What does this mean exactly? Will there be no office in Portland?

DPH: When I sold Academic to Blackwell's in April 1999 I promised the Academic customers that I would not merge the two companies until BBS could deliver the same or better service than they had from Academic. Over the past several years we have worked hard to make that promise possible and we have finally achieved it. In addition, Blackwell's has the resources to provide not just excellent bookselling but all the ancillary services libraries require, i.e., comprehensive on-line services, advanced connectivity with library ILS systems, etc. Blackwell's is committed to libraries in a way that will insure that money is available for continuing development and upgrading of systems and services.

All book distribution will be shifted to Blackwell's two distribution centers, Blackwood, NJ and Oxford. About 25 AcBC employees will be employed by Blackwell's in addition to the 10 or 15 others who have transferred in the last several years. Blackwell's is fortunate to be able to retain these employees and their decades of library and bookselling knowledge. It means that Blackwell's will have access to the specific knowledge about the individual needs of these customers making the transition much easier for the libraries.

Blackwell's will be 125 years old in January 2004 and, more impressive, is still in the hands of the founding family. The Blackwell's

are firmly committed to libraries and have been for a very long time.

ATG: What relation, if any, does this have to the purchase of Everett's?

DPH: Actually none. We have been planning the Academic merger for quite some time. It just so happened that Everett's became available at the same time.

There is one common element and that is that smaller booksellers are being squeezed by the need to provide higher discounts to libraries, getting lower discounts from publishers, and the need to invest heavily in IT. When Barry Fast and I decided to sell five years ago we saw these trends emerging and now we are seeing other booksellers experiencing the same trends. In the UK there are more small booksellers seeking partners and I think this trend will continue.

ATG: What is Blackwell's long term plan for the book business? In what new areas will you be expanding? What new marketing techniques will you use?

DPH: Blackwell's long term plan for the book business is determined by the larger forces affecting libraries. These forces include a difficult financial environment, demands to purchase information in new formats, library users expectations for instantaneous access to everything, and fewer resources. "Doing more with less" will be with us for a long time.

For Blackwell's to remain relevant we must add new services and features that help libraries work more efficiently in this environment. Not only do we need to provide excellent

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