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Anthony Watkinson
anthony.watkinson@btopenworld.com

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International Dateline

by **Anthony Watkinson** (Consultant, 14, Park Street, Bladon, Woodstock, Oxon, United Kingdom OX20 1RW; Phone: +44 1993 811561; Fax: +44 1993 810067) <anthony.watkinson@btopenworld.com>

My main interest is in scholarly communication and respective roles of publishers and librarians in relation to scholarly communication. In this report on the scene outside North America, I am not going to cover the very interesting changes in ownership at the heart of STM publishing. This is mainly because the **Kluwer Academic** story is ongoing. No one believes that the investment houses who have bought this publishing unit from **Wolters Kluwer** are going to leave it as a standalone. To the outsider it looks as if the owners are putting the Dutch management in charge, while they try to buy another company that will make for a large enough entity to do something serious with. The candidate is **Springer**. At the present time it would seem that the family is holding firm in its decision not to sell **Blackwell Publishing**, but, as I have said, this is an ongoing story.

For scholarly publishers, the big event in December is **Information Online**, which occupies most of the first week of the month. The site is <http://www.online-information.co.uk>. Until I checked the catalog I thought the conference was called International Online and it certainly used to be called London Online; at any rate it is still held in the inconvenient and depressing conference centre at Olympia. For publishers it is now more important than any meeting in North America as a gathering place. Oddly enough, before Online became the serious way in which digital information was made available, the big meeting was also in Europe. It is called (because it still continues) **MILIA** and takes place in Cannes, a seaside resort in France better known for topless models. It is where the CD-ROM is still king or queen. I suspect that for the technologists it may not be where cutting edge innovations are to be found. Alas too, although this is billed as "the world's No. 1 event for everyone who uses, manages or sources electronic information" I would guess that librarians do not make up a large proportion of delegates. Librarians are certainly present at the exhibition and publishers are geared to present, display and sell but they are quiet librarians. There is both an extensive free educational program and a conference organized by **Martin White of Intranet Focus**, well-known to readers of **ATG**. With due respect to Martin, whose program looked interesting, I have met very few people who actually register for the conference, unless they are asked to present. This whole enterprise should be a great opportunity for publishers, librarians and intermediaries to get together and discuss all the problems of the digital environment – but it does not work like that.

What was to be found at the Exhibition? In the first place there were certainly fewer exhibitors than in 2001. In 2001 there were exhibitors all round the gallery. In 2002 the gallery was empty. In addition, the big people seemed to be taking up more space but this might have been mainly because of a surprisingly heavy corporate presence of **Thomson** in the center of the hall. For years, to my personal knowledge, **Thomson** hierarchs have been trying to get divisions and companies to present in the same livery. This year they have finally and absolutely won and huge identical booths

for **ISI**, **Dialog**, **Derwent** and "Legal and Regulatory" faced each other across a sort of crossroads, which visitors approached to be intimidated. **Thomson** now offers itself as "a global leader in providing integrated information solutions to business and professional companies." This is an odd catalog for an event aimed at information professional and why the stress in "integrated?" In contrast **Elsevier Science**, presenting under that name and not subsumed into **Reed Elsevier**, looked positively small and homey – though of course they are not.

What does this sort of display mean for the end-user, or, one might say, the user in the end? Were there any obvious trends? I did not spot them on the ground but there is one quantitative measurement that can be applied. The event guide, kindly supplied by **Online Information** even to those who got in free, contains a series of navigational lists called Exhibition Trails, which list exhibitors under different headings. Presumably exhibitors decide into which categories they are assigned and they can designate a number of categories as relevant. Comparing the lists for 2002 with those of 2001, some conclusions can be drawn. Two big categories are "those exhibitors (who) provide scientific, technical and medical information in a variety of formats" and "those

exhibitors (who) provide technology, solutions and services for all your library needs." The former group totals 94 in 2002 and the latter 67, down from 2001 by 17% and 13% respectively. The more specialized groupings show bigger drops. For example, "intranets, extranets and portal solutions" is 21% down, "econtent and epublishing technologies & solutions" is 32% down, "search and retrieval solutions" is 26% down and knowledge management is 32% down. Are these buzz-concepts on the wane if not on the way out. In 2002 the mysterious organizers behind **Online Information** brought in a new category – "complete information solutions." This up-and-coming concept is applicable to "those exhibitors (who) provide the content, technology and professional services to create an enterprise-wide solution for the organization. 50 exhibitors saw themselves as part of this scene and librarians will be glad to learn that, judging by the list, libraries are among those "organizations" which can benefit from the treatments on offer.

From what I have said above, it is obvious that there are a lot of STM publishers around. This meeting is one of the places where the great and good gather, falling as it does between the **Frankfurt Book Fair** and the **PSP** meeting in Washington in early February.

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The other important item on the calendar is the so-called "Amsterdam" meeting of STM in the late spring. In 2003 it is back in Amsterdam.

In London in December the **International STM Association** hold two seminars (information-sharing) at the end of the Online week. The first of the seminars, on the Thursday, is mainly for those involved in the internal processes of the publishing houses and is entitled *Strategies of Journal Production in the Electronic Environment*. Librarians will be pleased to learn that publishers really are trying to get digital versions of journals articles online, in correct form and before the print version is available. It is a very difficult task, however.

The seminar on the Friday is the *Innovations Seminar*. This year there were over 90 present, mainly publishers, and the theme was web services—the third wave of online publishing. What is this third wave? The definition provided is that "publishers begin to develop innovative web services that add significant value to their content" and goes on to predict that "with the advent of the third wave, the journal itself may begin to be transformed from the model that has

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can help make sense of separate conversations with Collection Development, Acquisitions, Serials, Cataloging, Database Maintenance, Systems, Preservation, and consortial partners.

5. The challenge for vendors/libraries is to learn how to shoot the curl of the information wave rather than be pounded into the ocean floor. (The challenge for writers is to avoid sentences like that one, but it's 1:10 AM, and the deadline was at midnight.) Both customers and those who serve customers (and we are all both!) must work at the coordination, communication, and information sharing.
6. Consultants!

As the customer experience becomes more complex and frustrating, there is some risk for all providers of goods and services, including libraries. If patrons or customers receive unhelpful or partial responses or have to extract needed information piece by piece, they'll eventually give up, and will stop using that vendor or library. They'll switch to a competitor (**Google!**), or stop looking, or revert to the time-honored expedient of watching TV all the time. (Assuming, of course, that customer service can get their digital cable working.) You don't want that on your conscience now, do you?

But there is more good news here than bad. Now that technology, customization, and strategic partnerships have become the very air we breathe, competition can and will shift back toward service, toward helping customers and patrons get what they need from our products and services. The winners will be not only customers, but those organizations that can understand and simplify the customer experience. 🐘

served the scientific community for hundreds of years." In library circles, a prediction like this would refer to so-called "alternative publishing," the cluster of ideas and initiatives based around SPARC. What does it mean for STM publishers?

The keynote speaker was **Patricia Seybold**, the eponymous leader of the group of that name. Her line is making it easy for customers to do business with you. Her thesis is developed at <http://www.pspgroup.com>. What publishers offer should encourage rather than deter publishers—not rocket science but, as I am sure librarians will feel, something that needs to be said and at length. The other presentations, from publishers, developed the theme and personalization of products and services and forging closer relationships with the author community. For those interested in delving into such matters, the presentations themselves may be obtainable through <http://www.stm-assoc.org/infosharing/presentations.php>. Among the interesting offerings were, as usual, innovations from the **Institute of Physics Publishing**, who provide an annual update on what they are doing at **Charleston**. They propose customer focused services for authors and referees, recommendation services like **Amazon** and the creation of a smoother interface to encourage users to mine the content on offer. The speaker from **IOPP** pointed out that some of their innovations had not worked. He instanced, as not wanted by the community, special interfaces and dedicated "filing cabinets." The **Elsevier** presentation concentrated on their investigation into

what journal authors want and how they can satisfy these wants. Central to developments is the quest to provide authors with a 360 degree view of the publishing process so that the author can find out where his or her paper is in the process with ease and 24x7. "Traditional" publishing works because authors (not to mention editors and referees) go to traditional publishers: a lot of work is going on sorting out those practices that exasperate authors—and editors. It is clear that **HighWire Press** is, at last, beginning to view itself as more than just a facilitator if a little less than a publisher. As many readers will already know there is a lot of work going on in Stanford to provide offerings on behalf of all or most of the publisher clients. One perception interesting to me that came from the presentation by **Richard Newman** is that users need to have lots of options, but be given simple routes. Like Swiss Army knives, all tools should be available but not all open at the same time.

This is a quick selection of innovations. The discussion brought up, mainly tangentially, some concerns and some fundamental queries. Are we talking about content or services? What will happen to the journal itself in the "article economy?" Can publishers really handle the supplementary material in digital form, which is now beginning to stream in and which takes up a lot of space and handling? An old stager from the floor pointed out that librarians do not have money to pay for all the potential services on offer. I imagine that many readers will concur. 🐘

Devil's Advocate — COUNTER, XML, and Online Serials Measurement

by **Robert Molyneux** (Director, Statistics and Surveys,
U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science;
Phone: 202-606-9181) <bmolyneux@nclis.gov>

The purpose of this article is to elaborate on the major points of my talk at the last **Charleston Conference** and to discuss recent developments.

BACKGROUND

There was much discussion at the Conference about the measurement of the uses of online journals and databases. All agreed on the importance of this question and the inadequacy of the current reporting of data on the use of these expensive materials. **Ann Okerson** ably summarized these problems so I defer to her discussion of the many issues involved.

Given that there is a demand for the collection and distribution of "good" data on the use of online materials, the question now is: how to do it?

I have concluded that the true cost of that unpleasantness in the Garden of Eden was bad data. Before Adam and Eve messed things up, data were good and readily available. Now, we have to work to get good data—by the sweat of our brows. It is hard and expensive work.

THREE STORIES

Probably the prevalent view in the field is that good data come from sufficiently clear definitions. Let me share with you three cautionary tales from work I did with the **Association of Research Libraries (ARL)** in the 80s.

1. Expenditures for automation

At the time, the large academic libraries that were members of **ARL** were committing increasing resources to expenditures for automation. It was important to find out how much was being spent but there was no category in the **ARL** data to collect this number. **ARL** had not collected data on automation expenditures because it was a new and rapidly developing area. Like the matter of the use of online journals and databases, it was an expensive and fast-growing target.

Two committees of **ARL** each independently decided to find out the answer to the question of how much was being spent by the **ARL** li-

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