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International Dateline --

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her talk fascinating and a wonderful introduction to the subject.

The rest of the breakfast dealt with the **Endeavor ERM** product **Meridian** and the steps they are going through at **Endeavor** to develop the product. These guys are serious and the effort seemed systematic and well thought out. It was impressive.

Should each librarian who has tasks like **Ms. Ballard's** design and build her own such database? Vendors are investing in developing these products because they feel there is a market for them, after all, should each librarian in this kind of job also be an expert in databases? Or can the vendors hire the experts to develop products that are easy to use and with useful features?

I went from this breakfast back to the various **OPAC/ILS** vendors and asked: do you have similar projects? All I talked to have things in the pipeline. I had hoped to have a list of who is doing what but I found that the whole area is in flux and concluded that things would change between now and the introduction of products. Indeed, a fair amount of the details I found out at **ALA** have already changed. Most product introductions seemed to be scheduled for early next year. However, there were things in common that I found in talking to the vendors.

I found these similarities between them:

1. They all claim that their products will be compliant with the **Digital Library Federation's "Electronic Resource Management Initiative" (ERMI)** (<http://www.diglib.org/standards/dlf-erm02.htm>). Let me quote from a paragraph that describes what the initiative attempts to do:

"WHEN LIBRARIES ACQUIRE electronic resources from publishers or vendors, they must understand, record, transmit, and inform others about the many financial, legal, interrelational, and access aspects of these arrangements. The acquisitions and licensing processes are complex, publishers transmit this information to libraries in a variety of paper and electronic formats, and the number of licensed electronic products libraries

are collecting is increasing rapidly. Such situations tend to spawn local, ad hoc fixes; what is needed, by contrast, is an industry-wide, standardized solution. The **Electronic Resources Management Initiative (ERMI)**, an ongoing project of the **Digital Library Federation (DLF)**, is creating such a solution."

It appears that this standard is not yet completely formalized because the "final report" is to be completed this summer and it is not available on the Website as of this writing. As a result, complying with it seems to be a goal the vendors have established but actual compliance necessarily must await publication of the standard.

2. There is wiggle room in what the vendors are actually going to do because research is ongoing. There was a certain bit of everyone is doing everything and everyone is compliant but when there are few actual products to demonstrate, rather there are brochures, I thought that I better wait until the dates products were actually launched. As a result, the more I worked on this article, the shorter it got. I did see some demos, though. The **Endeavor** folks had screenshots and demonstrations of how aspects of the product will work but the **SIRSI** folks had an eye-popping live demo of what they were working on.

3. Will it be necessary to have purchased the **OPAC/ILS** of the vendor for a library to purchase the **ERM** product? Some vendors say their **ERM** product only works with the **OPAC**, some don't and, hence, will be available as a stand alone product. I bet the various **ERM** products to work best if you also own the **OPAC/ILS** from the vendor. However, every one of the **OPAC/ILS** vendors I talked to had an **ERM** product in development so I suspect there will be an option for you from your **OPAC** vendor.

4. The vendors I talked to are experimenting and testing in cooperation with libraries and these libraries are listed in their literature so there are operational prototypes being tested. These cooperating libraries will be a source of information if you are interested in seeing the unfinished products while they are being tested. The **Endeavor** folks are also using focus groups to decide which features to supply, so I am betting others are, too.

5. I believe that all will have a Web-based front end. The back ends seem to be various database engines.

According to information I collected, the following vendors have these products in process:

- **VTLS — Verify** (<http://www.vtls.com/Products/verify.shtml>).
- **Dynix — Horizon Web Reporter**. A white paper *ERM — What is it & What Solutions Does Dynix Provide* is available off its main page (<http://www.dynix.com/>).
- **SIRSI — Director's Station** (<http://www.sirsi.com/Sirsiproducts/directorsstation.html>).
- **Endeavor Meridian** (<http://www.endinfosys.com/prods/meridian.htm>).
- **Innovative Interfaces — Electronic Resources Management** (<http://www.iii.com/mill/digital.shtml#erm>).

I heard nothing about pricing but we will know the answer to that question soon enough. 🐉

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might remember that **Ms. Kackle** won this same category last year with her entry "Funding." Here is this year's Most Indignant, "Lies."

Aggregators say
They have everything you need,
But we know better.

Finally the winner of the \$20 prize for this year's best haiku, "Fortitude" by **Jason Thick**, a cataloger with the **Furtive County Library System**.

MARC format changes.
Delimiters like hot sand.
You are not afraid.

Few poems we know reach this level of bravery and exoticism. **Mr. Thick** intimates cerebral joy while giving one an almost physical sock to the belly. Reader, take heed of **Jason's** words, be brave, and submit your haiku in next year's **Annual ATG Haiku Contest**. 🐉

International Dateline —

by **Anthony Watkinson** (Publishing Consultant, 14, Park St., Bladon, Woodstock, Oxon, UK, OX20 1RW; Phone: +44 1993 811561; Fax: +44 1993 811067) <anthony.watkinson@btpopenworld.com>

The whole Charleston enterprise has always, or at least has for many years, been international in approach both in its meetings and its publications. Most people, both outside and inside North America, tend to assume that most advances in the world of information that we all inhabit come from the US or even, more narrowly, from California or even Stanford. This is not an unreasonable assumption. However an international perspective is justified because local circumstances do enable

some advances in the take up of e-resources to be made, which are not so easy to achieve in the complex, disorganized and even chaotic US academic scene. I have written in a previous "Dateline" about the impact of the **JISC** (the **Joint Information Services Committee** of bodies funding much of UK higher and further education) on the provision of digital content to the UK academic enterprise. In this issue, my aim is to give further information about the provision to this sector of eBooks in particular, to

point to some initiatives which may travel across the Atlantic and to offer some lessons for wider consideration.

My own particular interest is in e-monographs.¹ A personal communication from a real expert suggests, "In some respects, e-monographs have been more or less ignored for two to three years, as the more pressing issues relat-

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ing to e-journals have taken center stage.” You can extrapolate this statement to the whole eBook scene. Fortunately the definition of an eBook is outside the scope of this short article. E-resources for the teaching and learning environment have not developed as much as was expected. There has been more interest in e-reference, though not much hype. Aggregators, such as **netlibrary**, are still there and evolving, but much quieter than they used to be.

Is this a minority interest of a small number of keen librarians, and publishers experimenting with new models but not really committing to them and will it remain so? The answer to the first question is probably yes, but I hope that the answer to the second question is no. The point is that the arguments for eBooks are the arguments (now won) for e-journals. The big advantages are access and discovery for books and journals alike with the opportunities created for scholars (and particularly educators) to use the potential of the Web in framing their “messages” a little way down the line, though perhaps more significant a reason for eBooks than it has proved to be for e-journals.

The **eBook Working Group of JISC (EBWG)** is one of the eight working groups that support the **JISC Collection Team** in acquiring online resources for the Higher and Further Education Communities.² I have been a member of this group for some years, as an independent consultant, and am committed to its aims, but this has to be a personal interpretation of what they are achieving. I am assuming that **ATG** readers would not want to be presented with an official document.

The context is as follows. **JISC** is a national consortium. It is the broker of offers to a wide range of institutions. In the UK these institutions are divided into HE (Higher Education) and FE (Further Education). Very roughly HE equates to universities and FE to community colleges. A call to the **JISC** press office suggests that there are about 180 HE institutions and 400 FE institutions within the **JISC** orbit, but my informant was not sure. As all publishers know now, it is becoming very difficult to define the boundaries of any customer if pricing is on an FTE basis. The **JISC** provision was originally for HE only and they are now discovering what FE wants.

The outcome of successful negotiations is listed and available for opting in³ and ongoing negotiations are flagged elsewhere⁴ often for comment. eBooks are not separated out but the wide range is interesting in itself. To my mind it is an impressive range. Alas, it would be inappropriate to comment on the success or otherwise of any individual offerings. One general statement can, however, be made. E-reference has, as might be expected, received by far the most enthusiastic response. In one case the FE sector has been offered the whole of a major collection for a year for a nominal sum. This is serious educational engineering. E-monographs are a more difficult proposition, though there is a notable exception. One publisher with a much-touted offering has

seen a massive take-up. Collections of learning materials in eBook form are slated as an area for future concentration, though there are special problems.

Some major reports have been commissioned, which make clear some of the pre-occupations of the group. They have international relevance. The most important is titled *A strategy and vision for the future for electronic text books in UK further and higher education*.⁵ There are some interesting predictions. It is suggested that, although the e-textbook scene is dominated at present by the big players of the print on paper book industry, new players will emerge and the new players could be combinations of digitization/conversion companies, Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) vendors and broadcasters. As online diverges from print, librarians could find a growing role in materials for e-learning. The report suggests that there could be some friction between academics and librarians in this context. Finally there are some interesting speculations about “chunking.” Students may want bits of books. Not only are there of course, licensing problems but the academic, as an author, may be in conflict over matters of integrity with the academic, as a user. One of the recommendations urges an awareness campaign to encourage metadata for “chunks”.

A second report, a little less rigorous and more of a quarry for ideas is on *Promoting the Uptake of eBooks in Higher and Further Education*.⁶ Like many librarians, for example **Nancy Gibbs** in a Charleston presentation and elsewhere,⁷ librarians and publishers have come to realize that eBooks need serious marketing. Those of us involved in putting journals online in the mid-1990s are reminded of the problems then, but in spite of all the current tensions, there is, in this instance, more collaboration than seemed possible then. The strategy of the **EBWG** is to work with publishers, and this is also recommended in the report. A summary statement predicts:

eBooks, if adopted in a widespread fashion, would provide an answer to some of the challenges currently faced by higher and further education.

EBWG also commissioned a report on eBook mapping.⁸ The authors are **Chris Armstrong** and **Ray Lonsdale**, who have made earlier contributions of excellence.⁹ What is available and what are the perceptions of what is available in different disciplines? This is just the early stages of a project that has yet to gain additional funding. A fourth report is on the availability of free eBooks.¹⁰ From the point of view of a publisher it is good that resources are not just valued because they are free. They have to offer appropriate quality.

One lesson learnt by the **EBWG** is that dealing with a wide variety of institutions is not easy. In practice, there is a continuum of institutions, not a clear break between different types and the needs of one institution may be very different from the needs of another with an apparently similar status. Offerings of e-resources have to be properly explained, made available to all, and sent to the right person at the right time of the year. There are also the various problems of integration into locally produced mate-

rial that varies from institution to institution. How do you embed eBooks into a VLE in a way that can be covered by a license and which is also practical?

EBWG started in a reactive as well as a proactive mode. Publishers, who approached with vague ideas about a possible offering, were encouraged to develop an e-list and help with market research. Their offerings were underwritten to encourage them to get their acts together. These pump-priming activities, which may have had significant international impact, are being discontinued. The activities of the **EBWG** are to follow the procedures worked out, after quite a bit of trial and error, by its e-journal equivalent. Details can be found at the **NESLI** site.¹¹ Librarians will be polled to discover the collections of which publishers are of most interest. These and only these (in most circumstances) will be negotiated with—probably ten companies at the most. In the case of e-journals the **ALPSP** collection was given a wild card (as it were) because it was felt learned society publishers should be helped. In the eBook arena there is currently no such offering. Many might feel that that it is a pity that the **AAUP** cannot provide a similar collection of e-monographs from its membership.

There must also be a question about the reliance on a subscription model. For publishers (at least as far as e-monographs are concerned) it is likely to be the only model that has the possibility of being financially viable (see the reference to my own study above) but is another set of Big Deals the best route for libraries to take? **JISC** is certainly well aware of the need to emphasize selection and continued access, whatever the much-discussed Select Committee of the UK House of Commons¹² made about them. As in so many of its judgements, this report is wrong on this score. However—is this the model to go for? Could **JISC** take a role in providing a template for subject bundling that cuts across the silos provided by individual publishers, while rewarding accordingly?

Endnotes

1. [http://www.publishers.org.uk/paweb/paweb.nsf/0/b341c469f1bc60d280256ad2003ab2b9/\\$FILE/ElecSolMonPub-Report.PDF](http://www.publishers.org.uk/paweb/paweb.nsf/0/b341c469f1bc60d280256ad2003ab2b9/$FILE/ElecSolMonPub-Report.PDF).
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