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International Dateline — eBook: The New Serial?

by Dr. Peter T. Shepherd (Project Director, COUNTER) <pt_shepherd@hotmail.com>

This was the intriguing title of a very timely and well-attended seminar organized by the **United Kingdom Serials Group (UKSG)** in London on 9 November. The location, the **British Library**, could not have been more appropriate. The **BL** has one of the world's greatest collections of books in every format and continues to acquire new titles at an enormous rate. While the **BL** faces huge challenges in absorbing eBooks into its systems and making them available to its users, as a copyright library it is, at least, spared the challenge of finding the funds to purchase all of the titles it collects. This is not the case for the vast majority of librarians, for whom the business models that support the growing eBooks business are a significant source of concern.

eBook: The New Serial? was chaired by **Hazel Woodward of Cranfield University**. The question mark is significant, as there are clearly more questions than answers at this stage in eBook development. These included:

When is the eBooks market going to take off and what are the barriers for libraries acquiring and marketing e-monographs and e-textbooks?

Who is offering the best buying model for eBooks?

What are library consortia doing in this area and why is good eBook metadata important to the information community?

To try and address these questions **UKSG** assembled a broad range of speakers for the library, academic and vendor communities.

Andrew Wheatcroft of the **University of Stirling** opened the day with a visionary presentation covering eBooks in practice and theory. In this he quoted **Lynne Brindley** of the **BL**, who has predicted not only that by 2020 over 80% of UK book output will be available in electronic form, but that 39% of that output will be available only in electronic form. **Wheatcroft** also predicted that there will be an increasing proliferation of titles and that more content will be available in smaller packages for smaller audiences, especially as electronic delivery channels extend their reach globally. As this trend — a further example of the “nichisme” phenomenon already apparent in other markets — develops there is also likely to be an increasing fragmentation of content: considerable uncertainty exists about what will constitute a publication as we move closer to 2020. Discrete units of content corre-

sponding more closely to chapters or articles than to monographs or serials will be available, requiring a more granular system of item numbering, such as the DOI. **Wheatcroft** asserted that in order to thrive in an increasingly digital market the traditional book publisher should consider the role of the producer in the motion picture industry. This does not necessarily mean that **John Wiley** becomes **Sam Goldwyn**, but may have to evolve into a new species, **Sam Wiley** the Pubducer, whose priorities will be to extract more from less by having fewer product lines and deliver a greater lifetime yield from the IPR tied up in these product lines.

Jill Taylor-Roe (University of Newcastle upon Tyne) in her presentation addressed eBooks from the perspective of a librarian in an academic library that supports the research and teaching functions of the University. She likened the acquisition of the desired eBook content to a quest for the Grail and was very clear about the main drivers of that quest: student numbers, course structure, continuing professional development course, distance learning, pressure on physical resources and the failure of these physical resources to meet all core demands. Print alone is not the answer as the library cannot provide sufficient print copies of, for example, key text books at the time of peak student demand for them and the degradation of heavily used print titles both shortens their lifespan and reduces their value. **Taylor-Roe** regards eBooks as an important part of the solution to these problems but acknowledged that we are just at the start of the Quest, as a relatively small number of eBooks are as yet available. She has, however, a clear set of goals for her quest. These include: more e-textbooks; more interactive books with data, images, questionnaires, etc; multi-user licenses and reliable usage data. She stressed the importance of **COUNTER**, which is already setting widely adopted standards for online usage of journals, doing the same for eBooks and applauds its efforts in this direction. Having set out on this quest, **Taylor-Roe** is very clear about the next steps in the journey. These must include: greater co-operation between publishers and librarians; experimentation with new pricing models (the historical holdings-based model used by many publishers for online journals will not be acceptable to her as a basis for eBook prices); set standards for measuring eBook usage; compare usage of print and electronic versions; understand user preferences.

Another librarian perspective was provided by **Warren Holder** of the **University of Toronto**. He described the goals of his library in providing access to electronic books. These are:

demand: to meet the very different demands of different scholarly disciplines, as well as unspoken demands, such as student expectations

convenience: 82% of e-journal use is outside the library and 25% of e-journal takes place when the library is closed. These usage patterns have to be taken into account in making plans for eBook usage.

equality: 50% of students take classes more than 30km from the main campus
discovery: catalogue records provide crude approaches to the content of books; users want to find specific information in books

assessment: we do not know how people use books; we do not know what the impact of eBooks will be

Holder then went on to describe the large extent of the **University of Toronto's** eBook holdings: around 54,000 titles from around 250 publishers and supplied by around 65 service providers. This will increase by a further 200,000 titles in the near future as records for further eBook collections are added. He then went on to describe how usage of these electronic resources is measured: pages viewed, downloads, full-text access and titles visited were among the metrics listed. By these measures the trend in eBook usage is steadily upwards. New demands are also apparent. For example, the Faculty of Medicine wants to move to completely electronic delivery with equal access to all students. Further evidence of this fundamental shift has come from a survey of **University of Toronto** students, who are increasingly seeking to serve their information needs online and want access to a wider range of authoritative resources. **Holder** painted a picture of the contemporary student, which will ring true with many readers: he has grown up with the Internet; she expects immediacy; he prefers image to text; she thinks she knows everything; he learns asynchronously; she is adept at multitasking; he prefers electronic to print. A major focus at **Toronto** for the next three years will be a systematic survey whose objective is to gain a better understanding of the usage of electronic titles.

Other presentations given during the seminar were:

About TIME: interoperable eBook metadata (**Hugh Look** and **Godfrey Rust** — **Rightscom**)

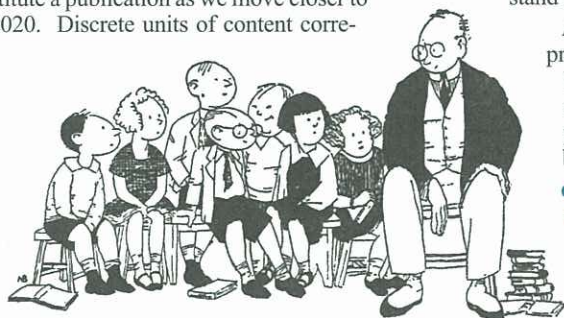
Infinite riches in a little room: how can we manage, market and mode the eBooks phenomenon? (**Linda Bennett** — **GoldLeaf**)

The COUNTER Code of Practice for Books and Reference Works (**Peter Shepherd** — **COUNTER**)

Whither eBooks?

I began this report with a list of questions. Did the seminar answer these questions? Not definitively, but then it is hard to make definitive pronouncements about eBooks at this stage in their development. The seminar did, how-

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ever, conscientiously address the questions and began to answer them. The eBook market is taking off and apart from budgetary constraints a major factor limiting the acquisition of eBooks by librarians is the availability of appropriate titles on acceptable terms. There was no consensus as to who is offering the best buying model for eBooks. Many librarians want to have the flexibility to select individual titles; others would be content with the book equivalent of the journals "Big Deal" provided the price was right. Library consortia appear to be less active in eBooks than in e-journals, but some librarians feel that this is appropriate, as they would prefer to have more direct control over eBook selection and publishing.

As for the larger question implicit in the title — "eBook: The New Serial?," it is clear that in an online world, many of the traditional distinctions between books and journals are becoming blurred, not only in terms of technology, but also in terms of business/distribution models, which will have implications for how publishers and librarians organize themselves. Of course, intelligent librarians and publishers are already reflecting these changes in their organizational structures. Aren't they?

The full papers from eBook: The New Serial? will be published in a forthcoming issue of *Serials*, the official journal of the **United Kingdom Serials Group**. 

Innovations Affecting Us — Social Bookmarking and User-Driven Classification

Column Editor: **Kristen DeVoe** (Pittsburgh, PA) <devoek@verizon.net>

Searching the Internet for information often leads to having folders upon folders full of bookmarked pages. That statement is true for me, and I suspect that it holds true for others as well. Whether casually surfing the Internet or searching for specific information, I tend to bookmark every page I look at that might be remotely useful in the future. As a result of this behavior, I have over 200 pages bookmarked in my Internet browser's bookmarks manager. Two hundred Web pages really isn't very many, but when you're trying to quickly get to a Web page that you know you have saved somewhere in your browser's bookmarks manager, scrolling through a long list and sorting through folders and sub-folders can be a frustrating and ineffective way to locate a page. Half of the time, if I cannot quickly locate a link in my browser's bookmarks manager I do a quick **Google** search to find the site again.

What is a possible solution to a situation such as the one I just described? Is there a better way to manage my bookmarked pages? One approach to organizing electronic information

is a quickly growing, ever evolving phenomenon called social bookmarking.

What is Social Bookmarking?

Social bookmarking is a tool for personal knowledge management that allows users to bookmark Web pages and Websites on a public Website, "tag" these bookmarks with keywords of their choice, and share their bookmarks with others using free, Web-based services such as **Furl**, **del.icio.us**, **Jots**, and **Spurl**, among others. This method of managing bookmarks differs from the more familiar method of bookmarking that allows users to save the addresses of Websites only to their computer for their own future reference. The different social bookmarking services available today share similar features that separate social bookmarking from bookmarking in your Internet browser. These common features among social bookmarking services include the presence of personal user accounts, a mechanism for adding links, comments, titles, and descriptions, bookmarklets in the Internet

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