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Electronic Resources Rocked My World! What's Changed and How We Managed

Mary Page
Rutgers University Libraries, mspage@rci.rutgers.edu

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Electronic Resources Rocked My World! What’s Changed and How We Manage

by Mary Page (Head of Acquisitions, Rutgers University Libraries, 47 Davidson Road, Piscataway, NJ 08854; Phone; 732-445-5894; Fax: 732-445-5888) <mary.page@gmail.com> <mspage@rci.rutgers.edu>

Can change be managed? Maybe in the broadest sense, but anyone who has been through a system migration, an ERM implementation, or large-scale print-to-digital transition will tell you that an ordered, logical process isn’t likely. The plan has to be modified and adapted along the way, because most of us have no idea what we are getting into at the start. We learn as we go, and mistakes contribute to the process as well as the best laid plan. Two steps forward, one step back.

In this issue of Against the Grain, five experienced members of our industry report on the ways that digital resources have changed their work environments. Abigail Bordeaux, the electronic resources librarian at Binghamton University, looks at how our patrons have been affected by an overwhelming number of options: A-Z lists, OPACs, online databases, etc. While we have provided our clientele with a wealth of resources, in many ways, we have complicated the process of finding information. (Even Abigail’s husband doesn’t stand a chance.) No wonder Google has so much appeal!

Everett Allgood of New York University shares his viewpoint on the impact of digital resources as a serials cataloger and erstwhile area studies librarian. He thoughtfully tackles four broad themes: the loss of the artifact, the homogenization of research library collections, the dreaded multiple versions dilemma, and finally, ERM Everett believes we’ve reached the “tipping point” in how we manage online resources, and he has a convincing argument for why this is so.

Anna Creech provides another perspective as the serials and electronic resources librarian at Central Washington University. Anna compares the relatively simple process for managing print to the highly complex and variable process for managing digital publications.

If Rumors Were Horses

Well, The International Association of Scientific, Technical & Medical Publishers (STM) a global membership organization representing more than 100 member companies in copyright issues, technology developments, and end user relations, announced today the appointment of Michael A. Mabe as its Chief Executive Officer. Effective May 2, 2006, Mabe will replace Dr. Pieter S. H. Bolman, who is stepping down after a two-year post as CEO. Said the dapper Mabe, “I am delighted and honored to be appointed as CEO of the International Association of STM Publishers. It is daunting to follow on from such an eminent predecessor as Dr. Pieter Bolman. Pieter has contributed enormously to the development of the organization, and its important international lobbying role. I very much hope to build on his excellent beginnings.” Jerry Cowling, Managing Director of Institute of Physics Publishing and current Chair of STM, said: “I am delighted to welcome Michael Mabe as our CEO and I look forward to working closely with him. His high reputation in publishing together with his knowledge and experience will be invaluable to the Association and its members.” I would like to add my appreciation to Pieter Bolman, who created the new role of CEO, for all he has contributed to the Association and to STM publishing during his distinguished career.” According to Mabe, “STM publishers are facing a wider range of challenges in a more rapidly changing market than ever before: calls for public access to publicly funded research, the continuing revolution of the digital

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Provocatively, she asks, “Can you hold an electron in your hand?”

Mary Greene, the serials cataloger at the University of Oregon, provides a reality check. Processes have changed, some for the good and some less so. Staff who took great pride in their work resolving problems with print serials now sometimes find that other staff members (acquisitions or systems staff, for example) take the lead in troubleshooting. Mary provides the important reminder that staff morale needs our attention as well.

And finally, Adam Chesler, the assistant director of sales and library relations for the American Chemical Society, describes the changing landscape from a scholarly society publisher’s point of view. With so many value-added options (interactive tables and links to yet more data and tables), what exactly is an article, not to mention a journal, these days? Adam’s perspective is so important for librarians to hear about: who knew publishers migrated systems, too?

All of these articles address the disruptive technologies that have changed the way everyone in our industry does business. We change, hit an obstacle, pick up the pieces, regroup, and do it again. While no one has quite figured out the ideal method, we’ve all done pretty well in finding the best way to shape the digital landscape to fulfill our service missions. What was true for the ancient Greeks is true for us as well: the only thing permanent is change. Just don’t try to manage it.

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platform as the foundation for delivering eBooks. Integration of all content has been the objective of the University for some time and combining access to eBooks along with the locally-loaded journals allows the user to search all digital content through one interface. Many users do not know or care whether the information they want is found in a journal article, in an abstract and indexing database, in a section of a reference work or a chapter in a book. They do know is that they want to find that information whenever they need it — 24 by 7, 365 days a year. To that end, University of Toronto Libraries has chosen MyLibrary to deliver eBook content. The eBooks will be integrated with over 70 abstract and index databases and over 7,300 journals to provide as comprehensive a search as possible for the users at the University. Carole Moore, Chief Librarian at the University of Toronto Libraries, believes that it is essential the University Libraries to be able to offer their users access to all content through one portal. The MyLibrary platform consists of a huge and diverse database of current content that provides a unique way to access collections of books: reports, journals, bulletins and other documents published by both Intergovernmental Organizations and major STM publishers. In total, some 40,000 current eBooks are available and this is expected to increase to over 80,000 titles over the coming months. This extensive collection of content has been integrated by Coutts into their selection-management system, OASIS, allowing University of Toronto the option to manage the acquisition of print and electronic collections through one interface, further enhancing the ability of the Librarians to create the most comprehensive offering of all types of information to their users. <warren.holder@utoronto.ca>

From Edupage, March 27, 2006 — A law professor at the University of Memphis, has banned laptops from her classes for first-year law students. Professor Entman says that they must take notes with pen and paper. “The computers interfere with making eye contact,” said Entman. “You’ve got this picket fence between you and the students.” She said she wants her students to spend less time talking down everything she says and spend time “thinking and analyzing” instead. As you might expect, students responded by circulating a petition to have the decision overturned and by submitting a complaint to the American Bar Association, which has since dismissed the complaint. James Smoot, dean of the law school, said that Entman’s decision will stand but that the school will review technology policies. For more info see — USA Today, 21 March 2006 www.usatoday.com/tech/news/2006-03-21-professor-laptop-ban_x.htm

Emerald Group Publishing has announced the publication of a special issue of Reference Services Review (RSR), dedicated continued on page 22

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