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I Hear the Train A Comin' — Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy

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Several years ago, our company (**The Berkeley Electronic Press**) began publishing peer-reviewed, born digital journals. As an experiment, we offered all of our articles under what we deemed a “quasi-open access” policy. The idea was that, although we are a commercial publisher that hopes to make money, we nonetheless would be best served by having as wide a readership as possible. We thus allowed nonsubscribers to access our content by completing a short guest registration form. The form allows us to inform their library of their interest in reading our journals. When libraries were convinced of sufficient interest in the journal, we reckoned, they would subscribe, and afterwards access for all faculty, staff, and students at that institution would be immediate, with no more forms to fill out.

This model has proven to be a great success for us. Since that experiment began five years ago, we have begun deploying our technology in other areas of the academy as well, notably institutional repositories. Dozens of schools now use our repository technology — **Digital Commons**, co-marketed with **ProQuest**. These repositories house a wealth of interesting and valuable scholarly information. It seemed like a logical extension to us to capture and display this open access content alongside the 30 quasi-open access commercial journals we publish under our own imprint. When we announced plans for this co-mingling — called **ResearchNow** — at **ICOLC** this past spring, it met with intense discussion. Some felt strongly that there are open access materials, and there are commercial journals, and conscious or unconscious attempts to blur the line were problematic.

This **ICOLC** debate over **ResearchNow** set me to thinking. Are there other projects that rethink traditional divisions between “free” and “subscription” materials? Who is charting new business models for scholarly communication, in nuance, rather than the broad brushstrokes of open access and commercial content? How did their models emerge, where do they break from the traditional norms of scholarly publishing, what have they learned to date from their efforts, and what do these lessons portend for the future?

Katina Strauch was kind enough to provide an excellent forum to examine these matters at the **2005 Charleston Conference**. I had the honor of moderating a session entitled, “The Confluence of Open Access and Licensed Content.” The session examined a number of emerging models that rethink traditional divisions between “free” and “sub-

scription” materials. Presentations were given on the specific efforts of the American Political Science Association’s Political Research Online service (<http://www.politicalscience.org>), Cornell’s Industrial and Labor Relations Review’s new home within the School of Industrial and Labor Relations’ institutional repository (<http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/ilrreview>), **Alexander Street Press’s** “free to the world” databases (<http://www.alexanderstreetpress.com>), and the **Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy’s** endowed content (<http://plato.stanford.edu>). In this month’s column, I will look at the latter as a fascinating case study of a new way to fund the dissemination of scholarly information.

The **Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (SEP)** — located at <http://plato.stanford.edu> — was launched in 1995 to serve as a “dynamic reference work” covering all areas of philosophy. The goal of a dynamic reference work is not just to grow in word count or number of entries. Rather, entries are meant to be evolving rather than static, and can be changed as new developments emerge in the field. Each entry is maintained and kept up to date by an expert or group of experts in the field. Currently, an editorial board of 100 distinguished philosophers oversee information across 45 topics (e.g., aesthetics, metaphysics). These board members solicit contributions from authors around the world (a small number of submissions are unsolicited), vet the drafts, oversee postings to the site, and work with authors to keep their contributions current as the scholarship in their topic evolves. In this latter regard, readers, too, play an important role. They are encouraged to contact the thousand or so contributing authors directly with comments, corrections, and other suggestions for improvements. As of late 2005, some 750 entries have been posted to the **SEP**, typically in the 10,000 word range. For a complete list, see <http://plato.stanford.edu/published.html>.

While the content maintained within the **Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy** and the dynamic reference work approach are exemplary (indeed, the project recently received the Best Content Award from the **Charleston Advisor** in its Fifth Annual Readers’ Choice Awards), it is the unique business model that I wish to examine in greater detail. The **SEP** is maintained on an annual budget of approximately \$200,000. This includes 1.7 FTE,

servers and other technology, as well as a small overhead allocation from **Stanford**. With the project managers committed to long-term unrestricted access for all, several funding options were discussed. Eventually, the **SEP** crafted a most unusual model. It convinced **Stanford University**, its host, to partner with a number of libraries and library consortia for the purpose of building a protected operating fund. In other words, they set out to raise an endowment. After some negotiation, they enlisted the **Southeastern Library Network (SOLINET)**, the **International Coalition of Library Consortia (ICOLC)**, the **Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC)**, and **Indiana University Libraries** to raise \$3 million over the course of 3 years. At the same time, **Stanford** agreed to raise \$1.125 million from private individuals and corporations. The intention is for the **SEP** to then live off the interest on that \$4.125 million fund.

The **Stanford** fundraising tentacles are legend, but from what sources would the libraries raise their share? Working with the **Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy**, they drew up a target list of libraries at academic institutions offering degrees in philosophy. Beyond the warm feeling one gets from contributing to the greater good, the libraries were provided some concrete incentives and assurances. The **SEP** Web pages accessed by participating universities’ readers are to be stamped with a customized banner acknowledging the support of the local library. Contributing libraries have access to the **Encyclopedia’s** quarterly archives as a single compressed file, providing a local archive option should the project ever terminate. Importantly, contributors are ensured governing input over the project.

Another intriguing aspect of the **Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy** funding model is this: **Stanford University** has agreed to return all library contributions (together with any interest and appreciation in excess of the annual payout) should the **SEP** project ever terminate. This is a unique element in the business plan: the libraries will see that their contribution appreciates through endowment management as it is put to work, yet is protected so they can invest in some other worthy open access project should this project ever cease.

So, is that warm feeling combined with these practical benefits enough to secure mass

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ians may be happening just when the need for them is lessening.


To return to my fiddling metaphor, **Campbell** suggests “Librarians *must* widen the discussion and raise the questions concerning the future of academic libraries” instead of making beautiful music while our libraries/our profession are being consumed by the flames of newer technology (page 28). He doesn’t try to answer the question but emphasizes that each campus must confront this question.

I think he is right but I find it difficult to come up with some possible answers that I could advance on my own campus to get the discussion going. I guess I would like to return to the ideas [a bit updated] advanced last year in my tongue in cheek short story in *ATG* of what the librarian whose library was destroyed by a tsunami should do (March 2005):

- Buy as many eBooks and e-journals as possible and get the faculty to use them for teaching purposes instead of our legacy printed collections that cost people and space.

- Tell the faculty to rely upon **Google Print** for old books and give them an account with which they can buy new books from **Amazon.com**.
- Build new space, or convert the old space generated by selling off all the books that can be found in **Google**, for enormous information commons complexes for student study needs. Provide most services 18 hours a day but keep it open the other six hours.
- If our newly emptied old buildings still have surplus space — turn them into gyms, theatres, etc., for all the people who are spending too much time in front of their computers.
- Replace paper and books conservators/bindery staff with more systems librarians able to deal with the new problems that come with digital forms of information.
- Look at the work that needs to be done and hire accordingly. Hire more subject specialists and make sure help desks are manned with people who know what they are doing. When a professional librarian is needed, hire him or her but don’t start

with a near religious belief in the need to find clones for ourselves. Cut the rest of the staff to the point that only those needed to do the above are left.

Do I really believe the above? I think I may be “just kidding.” Or am I? I suggest that you find **Campbell’s** article and spend some time thinking about these questions. 

*P.S. I would like to thank **Mark Miller** of **Montgomery College** in Takoma Park, Maryland who kindly pointed out that in my September 2005 Backtalk article I referred to myself as an ex-patriot when I should have said that I was an “expatriate.” Thanks so much for correcting me. All my patriotic relatives back home in Idaho will be much relieved. — **AF***

Endnotes

1. Campbell, Jerry D. (2006). Changing a cultural icon: The academic library as a virtual destination. *Educause Review*, 41, 16-30.

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emerging issues that include archiving and copyright concerns. How libraries will use this technology remains to be seen in many cases, but it may become more important if coursecasting proves to be a positive supplement to the university or college student’s learning experience.


According to the most recent **Pew Internet & American Life Project Report on Podcasting** (April 2005), over 22 million American Adults own an **iPod** or other **MP3** player and of those 22 million, 29% have downloaded a podcast. More specifically, almost 50% of the people who own an **iPod** or other **MP3** player and have downloaded podcasts are between the ages of 18-28. The report is available from http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/154/report_display.asp. Accessed 20 January 2006. 

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participation? If the price is right, yes. In the United States, the requested amount is \$5,000 a year for three years for Ph.D. institutions, \$2,000 a year for schools offering Master’s degrees, and \$1,000 for institutions with undergraduate programs. More than 400 libraries worldwide have committed to the project. Combined with a National Endowment for the Humanities challenge grant, the library fundraising arms secured commitments of \$1.3 million in its first year.

To be sure, there is a free rider problem that the **Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy** has not fully overcome. Some schools have not contributed (and may not be aware of the importance of their contribution), but nonetheless benefit from the contributions of others. The **SEP** has an outreach plan that targets institutions meeting criteria such as size, location, the kind of degree in philosophy it awards, and so forth. When a reader

from one of the targeted institutions attempts to access an entry, the system (using IP checking) returns a note at the top of the page gently reminding the reader to speak to his/her library about the benefits of financial participation. The hope is that, much like **NPR’s** pledge drives (or **bepress’s** own quasi-open access policy), the demonstrated researcher interest will convince the library to support the model.

The **Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy** is forging a new path in scholarly publishing. It is neither a subscription service nor an author pays model. Its content is free, but only so long as the community that benefits from it provides the necessary funding to attain its endowment threshold. It is operated not by individual scholars or university administrators or libraries, but by a combination of all the above. Will the **Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy** succeed? Early returns, both in terms of content quality and financial planning, are promising. Will the model be replicated and extended by others? Time will tell. 

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He also held various sales and marketing positions in **Addison Wesley** and **Simon and Schuster**. **Beale** holds a bachelor’s degree from **Loughborough University**, UK, has studied extensively in the United States, and is an active member of the **UK Publishers Association**. He and his family will be relocating to the Ann Arbor, Michigan area in the coming months, and he will be

based out of the **ProQuest** global headquarters there. www.il.proquest.com/

Do you have **ARTstor**? We do in our library and are learning more about its functionality and content every day. Was talking to **Bruce Heterick** <Bruce.Heterick@jstor.org> about it. (He has been home recuperating from double-hip replacement surgery. Ouch!) Anyway, **Bruce** says that **Max Marmor** and **Kathryn Wayne** will be doing an article on **ARTstor** for *ATG*. Stay tuned.

A fascinating article to read — “**Vatican ‘cashes in’ by putting price on the Pope’s**

copyright” by **Richard Owen** in *The Times*, January 23, 2006. Seems that the **Vatican** has decided to impose strict copyright on all papal pronouncements. www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0%2c%2c13509-2005615%2c00.html

And, finally, be sure and read **Bob Nardini’s** **Issues in Vendor/Library Relations**, this issue, p.75. It reminded me of my father, a research economist. When I was in high school, he gave me a small book called *How To Lie With Statistics*. It taught me a lot, just like **Bob’s** column on numbers ... very ... umm ... factual.

Signing off. See you in April. 