June 2006

International Dateline -- Scholarly Publishing: A European Perspective

Peter T. Shepherd
Project COUNTER, pt_shepherd@hotmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg
Part of the Library and Information Science Commons

Recommended Citation
DOI: https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.4986

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.
Group Therapy
from page 67

allows each team member to self-monitor his/her work flow. Some tasks rotate on a weekly ba-
sis, others rotate biweekly and still others ro-
tate less often. As each staff member moves to
new assignments, he/she is motivated not to pass
on a backlog to a colleague. The tedium of the
more boring tasks such as opening and sorting
mail or labeling is eased because responsibility
for these tasks changes more frequently.

In any organization, change is difficult. The
decision to discontinue serials check-in for cer-
tain categories of material served as the cata-
lyst for a vigorous, ongoing process of review
and evaluation. The staff embraced the need
for change and viewed the changes as an op-
portunity to hone existing skills and acquire new
skills, while simultaneously creating a flexible
organization that adjusts more readily to con-
tantly shifting requirements.

RESPONSE: Submitted by Andrea
Christman (Catalog Librarian, Day-
ton Metro Library, Dayton, OH)

Dayton Metro Library recently decided to
eliminate serials check-in for periodicals received
by our 21 branches, although subscriptions for
the Main Library will continue to be checked
in. In considering this change, Technical Ser-
vice asked for information from public service staff,
including the branch staff. After examining
staffing and reference needs, as well as patron
utilization of the collection, it was decided that
the library community and staff would be bet-
ter served by eliminating magazine check-in for
the branches.

Before January of 2006, all periodicals were
checked in at the Main Library (except for news-
papers). Issues were mailed directly to the Main
Library, where a serials clerk checked them in,
and then they were sent to the branches. Con-
sequently, there was often a delay in receiving
these publications at the branches; this was
particularly noticeable for periodicals with
timely information, such as U.S. News & World
Report. Branch staff indicated that they would rather have the
magazines faster than have them sent to the Main Library
for check-in.

Having the magazines drop shipped to the branches
meant that the branch staff would have to check the
magazines in themselves, or not check them in at all. If they
continued to check-in, they would also have to
maintain the summary of holdings statements
by editing them as old issues are discarded.
Branch staff felt that patrons did not rely on the
summary of holdings to tell them what was on
the shelf; the magazines are primarily a brows-
ing collection. Additionally, the summary of
holdings did not always accurately reflect what
was physically in the library because circulating
copies are checked out by putting item
records on “dummy” bibliographic records.
Creating item records on the magazine’s true
bibliographic record was considered, but most
branches did not want the magazines to be
reservable or to be subject to the wear and tear
of increased delivery. Given the additional staff
and the fact that patrons did not truly use
the summary of holdings, it was decided that
checking in periodicals at the branches could
be eliminated. We know that there are advan-
tages and disadvantages either way and the de-
cision was not unanimous; some branches
wanted to keep periodical check-in.

Several things, however, have not changed.
Most importantly, our catalog still displays
which branches have subscriptions to a
given title; there will also be a general hold-
ings statement, such as “Library keeps current
three years.” We recen-
tly migrated to a
new ILS and have not
yet begun automatic
claiming; branches are
to notify our Acquisi-
tions Department if an issue needs to be
claimed. Additionally, issues for the Main Li-
brary will continue to be checked in. The Main
Library staff felt that it was important to have
a listing of what they own since they are
charged with storing and binding the back is-
sues of selected titles for the entire library
system. Although it will take several years
for this plan to be fully implemented (the ad-
dresses on some subscriptions can only be
changed when they are renewed), Technical
Services hopes that both the patrons and the
staff will be better served with this new
procedure.

International Dateline — Scholarly
Publishing: A European Perspective

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

Two information industry gatherings, both
held in Europe in April, addressed some of the
most pressing challenges facing our industry at this time. At the University
of Warwick, England, a capacity audience of over 600 delegates attended the 29th Annual
Conference of the United Kingdom Serials Group (UKSG) from 3-5 April. While the leafy
Warwickshire countryside looked its best in the bright spring sunshine, delegates were not
tempted to linger out of doors for too long, as winter reminded us that she had not quite lost
her grip, with bracing northerly winds and occa-
sional snow flurries. Inside, we were treated to
a programme of plenary sessions and work-
shops/briefing sessions addressing topics such as
the economic evaluation of the scientific pub-
lishing market, innovations in scholarly com-
unication, the transition to e-only format, digi-
tal archiving, setting up an institutional
repository, non-standard licensing models
and journal article versions. A full programme of
this conference is available on the UKSG
Website (http://www.uksg.org/events/annual
conf/06.asp), while a new blog, “LiveSerials,”
provides further information on presentations
and discussions at the conference (http://live
serials.blogspot.com/).

Meanwhile, in a two day conference on 4-5
April, another group of industry leaders gath-
ered in Berlin for APE 2006: Academic Pub-
lishing in Europe, the Role of Information in
Science and Society. Jointly initiated by AKEP
(Electronic Publishing Working Group) and
ALPSP (Association of Learned and Profes-
sional Society Publishers), and organised un-
der the auspices of the European Commission
(EC), APE 2006 brought together 160 partici-
pants from 15 countries, and included publish-
ers, scientists, research funding organizations
and librarians. The goal of the conference was
to seek a common language on structural
changes taking place in publishing, and science
communication in the context of society at large.

In her opening remarks to APE 2006, Sally
Morris, Chief Executive of ALPSP, struck an
historic note, by pointing out that the heart of
academic publishing is in Europe and that the
advances in information technology and commu-
nication (ITC), to which European scientists
have greatly contributed, are now of fundamen-
tal importance to the publishing industry. This
theme was picked up by Dr. Nicole Dewandre
of the EC Research Directorate General, who
placed academic publishing at the heart of the
European research effort and stressed the high
priority given to research by the European
Union (EU). She stated that, in her view, STM
journals are an essential channel for the diffu-
sion of scientific knowledge. She also drew at-
tention to a study commissioned by the EC that
investigates the perceived market imperfections of the current publishing system and evaluates
alternatives made possible by the electronic
revolution. This “Study on the economic and
technical evolution of the scientific publication
continued on page 69

<http://www.against-the-grain.com>
markets in Europe” has been made publicly available (http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/science-society/pdf/scientific-publication-study_en.pdf) comments were being accepted up to June 2006 and will be followed by a conference during the last quarter of 2006.

Dr. Jurgen Renn (Max Planck Gesellschaft, MPG) gave an address on behalf of the MPG President, Dr. Peter Gruss. In this he reflected on the current scientific journal, the MPG’s role and attitudes towards the existing academic publishing process. In the view of the MPG the costs for the dissemination of scientific information have become research costs and Open Access (OA) publishing is a paradigm shift of the same order as the Internet and the Web. He contrasted OA with the “toll access” model currently practised by publishers. In his view new media have not been used optimally by academic publishers; he suggested examples of systems developed and run by scientists themselves as alternatives. Dr. Renn stressed that new publishing models need to be sought and that if we keep mapping existing structures to a new medium, we shall create rather than cross boundaries. He further stated that OA is not directed against publishers, but is rather a transformation process towards a better infrastructure that publishers can also exploit. The development of OA should focus on long-term preservation and quality control.

In a session devoted to the Scope of European Publishing, Dr. David Hoole of the Nature Publishing Group provided an historic sketch to illustrate the changes in geographic centres and the circumstances under which publishers operate. World War II had a profound impact on culture, economy and publishing technology developments. The STM industry achieved remarkable growth after the War, but now faces an uncertain future. Research funding organisations are increasingly trying to protect their investments and to control publishing processes. A challenge for publishing, being a global business, is to cooperate with the nationally organised funding agencies. Asian input into the volume of papers published will grow rapidly, but for now the US still has the number one position. NPG envisages several development scenarios, but Dr. Hoole stressed that publishers need to build on experience, develop business in a global way and offer value for money.

Dr. Willy Stalmans, formerly Chair of the FEBS Publication Committee, explained that from the point of view of learned societies, free access to all publications is not a priority. Current income for societies from publications can be very significant and is used to support other society activities. From the consumer perspective a policy of free access seems unfair. For authors it would mean an added burden to arrange and administer publication funds. Embargo periods as suggested by some funding agencies, which are stipulating free access after an initial period down to 6 months, are unrealistic for many high quality publications.

Dr. Peiro Attanasio (CEO of mEDRA) demonstrated the complexity of the value creation process in the publishing sector today. It is possible to envisage the elimination of various active groups in the chain, but at a price. In a situation where market conditions are affected by politics, new policies, including OA and copyright, may have the effect of strengthening the competitive advantage of large players. OA, under certain conditions, may promote market concentration. Dr. Attanasio thinks that smaller publishers need to create alliances with universities and authors, and invent a new business model.

In a session on Technology and Innovations, Hans Jansen, Acting Director of e-Strategy at the National Library of The Netherlands discussed large scale and long-duration archiving strategies, including migration and emulation, or the “Safe Place Model.” The latter is adopted at his library as the only fully acceptable solution. Within this framework, agreements are reached with publishers (around 20 of the largest publishers so far); in principle, every STM publisher is welcome. With the current system the National Library of the Netherlands can add up to 40k articles per day.

<http://www.against-the-grain.com> 69
The financial aspects of this model have yet to be fully worked out. As long as there is commercial interest among the publishers, articles are available on licence conditions. When demand declines for an article, it can be offered for free. Problems are foreseen, however, in the area of international electronic publications, which do not fall within the scope of a national library.

In a session on Strategic Change, Mark Seeley (Legal Counsel, Elsevier Inc.) illustrated how publishing functions are migrating far outside the traditional STM sector. Larger companies have invested in a variety of author support systems, but the offerings of new entrants — some of them companies that used to provide back-office services for publishers — make us aware of the changing roles of stakeholders. One central question is whether publishers should change their role. Some new services, like PatientInform, could easily be set up by publishers, but they will have to offer significant services to the community to stay competitive. On the other hand, it is not an easy task to develop easy-to-use systems.

In a Closing Panel discussion, chaired by Herman Spruit (Royal Brill Academic Publishers and IPA), a general debate followed introductory statements by the three panelists. In his remarks, Dr. Albrecht Hauff (CEO of Thieme Verlag) expressed doubts as to whether a change from a competition-based publishing system to a state- or university-run system would be a change for the better. In his opinion the neutrality of publishers with regard to content is very important. Moreover, he stressed the importance of copyright protection and reminded the audience that lower levels of protection would discourage publishing activities, especially the scientific monograph. He thought it highly unlikely that OA publishing would lead to a reduction in costs, but reminded the audience that publishers must add value to the dissemination of science or they would become redundant. Dr. Renn of the MPG agreed with Hauff that added value and investment are necessary and that there is no reason why the future system should be less expensive. On the other hand, he felt that it would be beneficial for the publishing business to be guided by the most innovative and advanced scientists. He urge the publishing industry to shift their investments from conserving the old system to infrastructure and value-added services in innovative science activities.

Dr. Klaus Saur (Walter de Gruyter GmbH, Berlin) explained that publishers still play a very important role, but thinks this role is endangered by recent legislation and public funding policies. As a result of recent OA initiatives, he warned that many long-standing established publications may have to be discontinued. Unlike Renn he thinks that scientists do become competitors for publishers when they deliver all their content via OA channels. Saur thinks that these developments, combined with the budget reductions in libraries, will lead to a reduction in the quality of scientific information.

The ensuing general debate was largely driven by the issue of OA and a lively discussion revealed a wide spectrum of opinions. Renn reinforced his earlier championing of the OA model by stating that not only is information held in a closed system at the moment, but publishers are investing to keep it closed. This point was supported by Mathew Cockerill of BioMed Central, who stated that "OA is the only way to allow the full resources of academia to throw that creativity at finding the best ways to discover content and put that content in context." Stalman reiterates the point that if scientific societies were to adopt OA they would lose income that currently funds courses, congresses and fellowships, leaving European bio-scientists homeless and impoverished. In the best scenario, some of these activities might be taken over by, for example, the EU, but then scientists would have to face consequences that were eloquently stated by the physicist Sir Ernest Rutherford as long ago as 1926: "It is essential for men of science to take an interest in the administration of their own affairs, or else the professional civil servant will step in — and then Lord help you!"

In his closing statement, Panel Chair Herman Spruitj pointed out that OA business models should not be confused with the effects of digital distribution already achieved: scientists have at their fingertips more information immediately available than ever before and we have experience with more than one business model already. The question is now: Who in the information chain should pay the bill? There seems to be an agreement that more than one model can exist: and that an abrupt change is not the best solution for the academic community.

Despite all the energy and investments publishers are devoting to changing their role, if they are not seen as adding enough value and are not seen as proactive enough, authors, libraries and funding agencies will vote with their feet; technology is not the pre-rogative of publishers only but available to all players.

A full report on APE 2006, including the full conference programme and further details of the presentations and discussion is available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1477/5,814.