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People Profile: Aline Soules

Editor

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enable eBooks to “handshake” with the rest of the library’s technology, digital rights that determine print and download restrictions, archiving issues, etc. These may affect users’ attitudes about eBooks and their ability to use them, but users don’t connect these conditions to such things as print annoyances. It is the negotiator who must determine the priority to give to issues that directly affect the user. The higher the priority the negotiator gives to solving user frustrations, the more likely eBooks will be used and used often. If the acquisitions librarian is not the negotiator, he or she can be proactive about identifying and communicating user priorities to the negotiator on the users’ behalf. This is where acquisitions and the user are clearly connected. In larger libraries, where acquisitions is more divorced from the public interface, it can be particularly difficult to remember that actions and a sense of urgency about these issues are as important to users as the face-to-face interactions they have with public services librarians.

Individual eBooks

What are also entering the system in increasing numbers are individual eBooks separate from packages. These may be less easy to manage because we are just figuring out how to handle them, but they are important as they are selector-driven and chosen with the library’s particular users in mind. While the purchase of a print book inherently implies a contract, we have rarely had to sign one or deal with a shrink-wrap license, although both happen occasionally. With eBooks, however, there will likely be more of both. This will increase acquisitions workload, but as libraries develop lists of required, desired, and optional features, hopefully, priority will be given to users’ direct and overt needs.

The Future Evolution of the eBook

A more complicated issue is predicting the future. As librarians, we participate with vendors in discussions about the future, but in daily life, most of us react to industry developments. Many of us work in small or medium libraries, coping with constrained budgets, and not in large libraries that influence the future through Google partnerships and other initiatives. Further, while vendors stay abreast of industry developments, once they have products, they also react to stay competitive. They must stay in business today with their current products as well as survive transitions to the future, let alone creating that future. As a result, many of us, vendor or librarian, put aside the cutting edge to cope with today, instead of planning for potential future scenarios.

An interesting article in the *Miami Herald* addressed the question of the slow adoption of eBooks, in this case e-textbooks. The article quotes **Bill McKenna**, director of digital products at **Follett**, which operates more than 700 college bookstores: “Publishers are having a hard time figuring out what they need to do.”² **Follett** has about 1,000 titles in digital form and the e-version is about half the price of the print

against the grain people profile

Aline Soules

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BORN & LIVED: Born in Scotland. Lived in Scotland, Ontario (Canada), Michigan, and California.

EARLY LIFE: I grew up in Scotland.

FAMILY: I am a widow with one son, now a Ph.D. in Computing Science working for **Hewlett-Packard** in Palo Alto, California. (Yes, I am a boasting mom!)

EDUCATION: B.A.(Hons.) in English Language & Literature, **University of Windsor**, Windsor, Ontario, Canada. M.A. in English in Ontario at the **University of Windsor**. M.S.L.S. in library science at **Wayne State University** in Detroit. MFA in Creative Writing at **Antioch University**, Los Angeles in a low residency format (i.e., primarily online via distance learning), which has taught me a lot about being a distance learning student.

FIRST JOB: Librarian, **Lawrence Institute of Technology** (now **Lawrence Technological University**). I was there for 2 1/2 years.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: **University of Windsor**, 12 years, various positions.

University of Michigan business school, 14 years, various positions.

California State University, East Bay. So far: almost 5 years.

IN MY SPARE TIME I LIKE TO: Write poetry and short fiction. Sing — I belong to two choirs.

FAVORITE BOOKS: One of those almost-impossible choices! But here goes: *Einstein’s Dream*, by **Alan Lightman**. Poetry of **Jane Kenyon**, **Mary Oliver**, **Stephen Dunn**, many others!

PET PEEVES/WHAT MAKES ME MAD: Laziness, lack of persistence.

PHILOSOPHY: Never give up (to quote Winston Churchill). Care.

MOST MEANINGFUL CAREER ACHIEVEMENT: Another toughie! How does one make a difference? Does one make a difference? There are times when I think that what I am doing is making a critical difference and later, it emerges that it was just a blip on the landscape. There are other times when I think that what I’m doing isn’t that big a deal and it turns out to be more important than I thought originally. Ask me ten years after I retire!

I suppose the most meaningful thing we can all do is help people with information — finding it, evaluating it, whatever. It’s why we chose this career, I presume, so that, possibly, will be our most meaningful achievement in the long run.

Certainly, I have mentored people and that has been meaningful to me. You should probably ask them if it has turned out to be meaningful to them!

GOAL I HOPE TO ACHIEVE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW: To keep going and find new goals.

HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: Online. And what will we be doing? Who knows? Something different from what we’re doing now; something we can’t yet envision. 🍄



version. Yet, they’re not selling. The reasons cited are “lack of knowledge, poor marketing, and few choices,” yet publishers persist “so when an opportunity comes up, they can act on it quickly.”³ Once students and parents catch on, which will happen with reduced costs and publisher drive, and once faculty experience pressure to choose an e-version either from students or from the university’s growing use of online courses requiring links to learning management systems, e-textbooks

will likely take off. That, in turn, will drive the demand for library-provided eBooks, probably also linked to learning management systems, and we would be advised to be ready. Other drivers come from both inside and outside the industry. After hurricane Katrina, for example, **Springer** gave eBooks to seven New Orleans universities in what was described by recipients as an “unprecedented” gift.⁴ This could create a strong market in the New Orleans area

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