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International Dateline -- European Conference Adds Weight to Debate on Scientific Publishing

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seem that features come from nowhere.

Would that they did. Anyone, again, who's spent any time at all in system or software development knows that writing code is usually the easy part. Deciding what code to write, that's hard. In other words, somehow sorting through all the customer comment, as filtered, interpreted, and delivered by those within an organization with the job of communicating with customers or users; having a way to record what they bring back in a systematic way; then exposing all pertinent individuals and groups within the organization to some version of what will seem to some of them an unworkable mass of marginally useful advice that we could have thought of on our own; while tactfully not making this information too available to those who are interested but who may not fully understand that their primary job is something other than systemmaking; while finally, hardest of all, actually deciding what to do.

Or, as it is always called, "prioritization." To readers of *Against the Grain*, for whom barely an hour passes some days without their hearing the word once or twice, it will likely be a surprise that the word is considered jargon by those who track that kind of thing. "Prioritization" is made from "prior," of course, a word which comes to us through the French, English, and Latin of the Middle Ages, when it referred to monastic officials, and then later to the magistrates of the Florentine republic. It derives before that from the Latin of the Romans, who meant "superior" when they used it.

The "-ize," from Greek, is a suffix we use to turn nouns into verbs. "Within reason," says a 1965 edition of *Fowler's Modern English Usage*, "it is a useful and unexceptionable device, but it is now being employed with a freedom beyond reason." The *American Heritage Dictionary*, 3rd edition, 1992, remarks that the word "is widely regarded as corporate or bureaucratic jargon," and was considered "unacceptable to the great majority of the Usage Panel." The 1996 edition of *Fowler's* notes that "prioritize" has "remained locked in the jargon of business managers, politicians, and other officials, i.e. among people who sometimes like to dress up their documents and speeches with high-sounding words." While being grouped with "officials" is some repayment, these seem cruel and unfair judgments to those of us who, beyond merely using the word, actually have to do it all the time. Even on the Web, where one would think prioritizers might find a little sympathy, one online guide to usage advises, "Pompous. Avoid this term. Instead say 'order,' 'set priorities' or 'rank.'"

It's no fun, that's for sure, prioritization. Old **Fowler** himself, if he were still around, and each one of his successors, ought to be made to take a turn at it. Then we'd see what kind of "usage" these Panels would prescribe for the rest of us. We should make that crowd figure out some other way of saying how — this time avoiding jargon — to call a meeting in order to "rank in order of importance to users or customers, combined with a ranking in terms of cost of development to us, combined with all the personal and departmental political baggage attached to this list, and with (for a business) an estimate of what level of new sales each change will mean to the company." They might, after their very first meeting, find the word "prioritization" the embodiment of elegance.

Although it's doubtful that any **WORD** user asked **Microsoft** for a little animated character, it's easy to imagine how **Microsoft**'s now-benched **Office Assistant** came into being. Remember? The smiling, omnipresent, but thankfully short-lived little paperclip riding a magic carpet of lined paper that distracted you constantly with the facial expressions, blinking eyes, turning head, hand motions, and unasked-for advice that some Team at **Microsoft** programmed in? This creature even had a name, "Clippit," and would morph, at user option, into a smiling dot, into a robot, into **Shakespeare** or **Einstein**, and into other incarnations beyond those.

The **Office Assistant**, once a standard **Office** feature, "came to be loathed by many users," according to **Wikipedia**. (Entries like this, by the way, are where **Wikipedia** whips *Britannica* hands down.) It's still around, although now, thank goodness, is buried alive beneath a blessed default of "Hide." Surely this creature was born one day at some **Microsoft** meeting where a person from Marketing, or a similar department, told product managers or business analysts or developers that users had conclusively described **Microsoft Help** as impenetrable and inaccessible. Why couldn't someone do something about it?

Then someone did, probably a person or persons who'd figured out that animation and graphics were the coming thing. So, a group went out and did their work against this finding on **Help** and by the time they were done, other groups, taken aback as they may have been by the animated paperclip, did not have the means of killing this thing, since they had no way, likely pressured by a degree of pre-release publicity, to produce an alternative feature that would address this amply documented user need in time for the next release deadline.

There you have it, prioritization. No matter how things turned out in the end, **Microsoft** actually did quite accurately prioritize — or, more correctly in usage, establish the relative importance of — a better **Help** function in **WORD**. In the real world, though, prioritization at some point intersects, or doesn't (as with the **Office Assistant**) with the need for concrete features that satisfactorily address the needs, for a business, of both customer and company.

And that's the trick, bringing the seats in this orchestra into tune. All the cacophonous improvisation from users, field reps, public services and other library staff, developers, trainers, managers and administrators, analysts, and others with a part to play in development and what precedes it? Every one of them experts of a sort, of course. Sometimes, somehow, there's a degree of melody and harmony in the din. A good listener can hear it. For libraries and their vendors today, there's no more important point of connection, or missed connection, than this partly covert area, systemmaking.

There's very little in the world today so irritating, for those of us who spend most of our workday sitting before a computer screen, as a feature that does nothing, or worse, does you damage. But a thoughtfully designed, beautifully executed feature, one proving that a development team has symphonized to the point of connecting with users? Few notes are as sweet, either to play, for a development team, or to hear, for a user who feels that this music was written for me. 🐦

International Dateline — European Conference Adds Weight to Debate on Scientific Publishing

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

The very fact of a conference on scientific publishing, sponsored by the **European Union (EU)** and held in the **Charlemagne Building** in Brussels, was the strongest of signals to publishers and researchers alike that one of the world's most influential political entities is now very interested indeed in access to, dissemination and preservation of scientific information. That publishers, researchers, as well as librarians received that signal — loud and clear — was evidenced by the attendance of more than 500 delegates, including some of the leading lights from research, industry and government.

The Journey to Brussels

The conference, **Scientific Publishing in the European Research Area: Access, Dissemination and Preservation in the Digital Age**, held on 15-16 February 2007, was the latest in a series of initiatives from the **EU** designed to stimulate debate and evolve policy on scientific publishing in the electronic age,

and the culmination of a period of intense debate that was initiated by the **EU**'s publication of a Study on Europe's scientific publication system in March 2006. The debate intensified in the days leading up to the conference. Not only was there a petition (*http://www.ec-petition.eu/*) signed by over 20,000 individuals calling on the **European Commission** to adopt policies that will guarantee free public access to research results, and the Brussels Declaration, stating the position of the major STM Publishers, but also a characteristically provocative lecture from Richard Smith (*www.plos.org/cms/node/204*), former Editor of the British Medical Journal, in which he called for and end to 'the slavery of traditional publishing.' Apparently the globe is not the only thing warming up; the temperature of this debate is increasing steadily.

When the **European Commission** published its Study (*http://ec.europa.eu/research/science-society/pdf/scientific-publication-study_en.pdf*) on the scientific publication system in Europe in January 2006, it was with a view to obtaining feedback to provide input for the conference held earlier this month. In launching this Study the **European Science and Research Commissioner Janez Potocnik** said "It is in all our interests to find a model for scientific publication that serves research excellence. We are ready to work with readers, authors, publishers and funding bodies to develop such a model." In the intervening 12 months it has become apparent that while all of these constituencies willingly subscribe to the Commissioners objective, they have very different ideas on how it should be achieved and what the model for scientific publishing in the 21st century should be.

The original Study looked at the economic and technical evolution of scientific publication markets in Europe, acknowledged that there have been significant changes in the landscape over the last 30 years, in particular the rise of Internet use, and confirmed that scientific journals are an essential channel for the dissemination of scientific knowledge. It concluded that, with large amounts of public money invested in research, it becomes important for publications reporting on that research to be accessible to as wide a public as possible. Recommendations for future action included:

- Guaranteed public access to publicly-funded research, at the time of publication and also long-term.
- A "level playing field" so that different business models in publishing can compete fairly in the market
- Ranking scientific journals by quality, defined more widely than pure scientific excellence

- Developing pricing strategies that promote competition in the journal market
- Promoting the development of electronic publication

These recommendations are not uncontroversial, as became apparent in the ensuing debate, during which researchers, funding agencies, librarians and publishers all had their say, which culminated in a number of statements immediately prior to the February 2007 Brussels conference.

The position of the international STM publisher community was clearly stated in the *Brussels Declaration* (*http://www.stm-assoc.org/brussels-declaration*). Inter alia, this declared that:

- the mission of publishers is to maximize the dissemination of knowledge through economically self-sustaining business models
- current publisher licensing models are delivering massive rises in scholarly access to research outputs
- raw research data should be made freely available to all researchers
- open deposit of accepted manuscripts risks destabilizing subscription revenues and undermining peer review
- "one size fits all" solutions will not work

Meanwhile, over 20,000 researchers, senior academics, lecturers, librarians and citizens from across Europe and around the world signed a petition endorsing the recommendations of the **EC**-commissioned study and calling for free public access to publicly funded research. In this they were supported by a number of leading education, research and cultural organizations, including the **European Research Council**, the **Wellcome Trust**, **CERN**, **CNRS** and the **Max Planck Society**. **Richard J. Roberts**, winner of the **1993 Nobel Prize** for Physiology or Medicine, in supporting the petition, said "Open access to the published scientific literature is one of the most desirable goals of our current scientific enterprise. How can we do cutting edge research if we don't know where the cutting edge is?'

Richard Smith, former Editor of the *British Medical Journal* and advocate of open access publishing, has used a vivid historical analogy. Noting, in a recent presentation, that 2007 marks the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade by the **British Empire**, he accused traditional, subscription-based publishers of acting like slave owners and compared open access advocates to abolitionists. In the early 19th century large parts of the British economy, as well as others, depended on slavery. Yet, in March 1807, the slave trade was abolished in the **British Empire**. **Smith** calls for a parallel and comparably principled move today: "for the sake of global scientific progress, human development and poverty alleviation, it is surely time to end the slavery of traditional publishing."

Brussels Speaks

With these declarations, petitions and oratorical flourishes

ringing in their ears, the Great and Good gathered in Brussels to debate the issues over two days of presentations, round table discussions and workshops. The first day of the meeting began with a speech from **Janez Potocnik**, **EU** Commissioner for Science and Research. In this he stressed the importance of raising the profile and standing of European research and of having a European science infrastructure to drive forward innovation and competitiveness. He was followed by a series of presentations on the current scientific publication system, a discussion on new opportunities for the research community and a debate on the trends, challenges and opportunities for the scientific publication market. The afternoon was devoted to three parallel workshops covering business models, e-infrastructure, the quality assurance of scientific publications and copyright/digital rights management.

The second day's programme had a rather different structure, with reports on the previous day's workshops and a round-table discussion before the meeting closed with a speech from **Viviane Reding**, the **EU** Commissioner for Information Society and Media. Her audience was thrilled to learn that scientific publishing will be one of the highlights of the upcoming Portuguese presidency of the **European Commission**, with a view to working towards a common European approach. The publishers in her audience, however, may have been less thrilled by her declaration that research outputs should, in principle, be accessible to all through open repositories after an embargo

period. Furthermore, she said, the **EC** will experiment with faster and wider access and will support the cost of author payments in their research grants.

At the end of the conference the **EC** published a rather banal, if balanced, Statement (*http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/digital_libraries/doc/scientific_information/communication_en.pdf*), which had been prepared earlier. The statement may have been a disappointment to true believers in Open Access, but will have brought some comfort to the publishers. While noting the strategic importance of scientific information and the benefits to science and society of ready access to this information, it also noted that **EU**-based publishers produce 49% of total global journal output in an industry that employs 36,000 Europeans. Against this background, the **EC** will take the following actions:

Access to Community funded research

The **EC** will take measures to promote better access to the publications resulting from the research it funds, which will include a financial contribution towards publishing costs, including open access publishing.

Co-funding of research infrastructures (in particular repositories) and projects

The **EC** will intensify its activities regarding infrastructures relevant to scientific information, in particular linking digital repositories at the European level. Funding will be made available to this end for the period 2007-2008.

Input for the future policy debate

To feed the debate and the policy process, the **EC** will launch a study on the economic aspects of digital preservation, to start in 2007.

Policy co-ordination and policy debate with stakeholders

Further Deliberations and Discussions will be initiated and encouraged, both within the **EU** structures and with stakeholders.

In its conclusion the **EC** acknowledges that access to, dissemination of, and preservation of scientific information are major challenges of the digital age. Success in each of these areas is of key importance for European information society and research policies. It also acknowledges that the different stakeholders in these fields have differing views on how to move forward towards improvements for access, dissemination and preservation. All, one has to acknowledge, true.

And Now?

You, dear reader, might think that these are rather pedestrian conclusions, considering the enormous amount of European energy, creativity and brainpower that has been devoted to this subject over the last 12 months. Given that a significant portion of the Brussels conference was devoted to a discussion of business models for the electronic world, you might, perhaps, also wonder why there was no speaker from another content-based industry — such as music — where the Internet has revolutionized the business model within the space of a few years and from which the scientific information world might have something to learn. When you delve to obtain some new insights that the **EC** study and conference might have contributed to our understanding of the future of scientific publishing, you may find you delve in vain. Perhaps this does not matter. In a scientific publishing world in which readers increasingly come to journal articles via **Google**, **Google Scholar** and other free search engines, where a steadily growing portion of the journal literature itself is freely available, and where the **Howard Hughes Medical Institute** has signed a deal with **Elsevier** that allows free access to its articles six months after publication, you might think that events outside of Brussels are going to determine the pace of change in scientific publishing, as well as the business models that support it. You might very well think that. I couldn't possibly comment.

Note: The presentations given at the conference "Scientific Publishing in the European Research Area: Access, Dissemination and Preservation in the Digital Age" are available at http://ec.europa.eu/research/science-society/page_en.cfm?id=3460.

Innovations Affecting Us — Open Source in the Library: An Alternative to the Commercial ILS?

by **Kristen DeVoe** (Electronic Resources Librarian, College of Charleston) <devoek@cofc.edu>

Introduction

How much did your library pay for its integrated library system? Chances are that a lot of money was spent on the purchase of an ILS and that a lot is still being spent for ongoing maintenance and adding new features. The development and support of automated software is a half-billion dollar a year industry. But what if your library could run a fully functional ILS *for free*? That is, with no initial payment and no ongoing maintenance fees? This is exactly what some libraries, tired of paying for expensive commercial automation systems or unable to afford one, are doing. Open source integrated library systems have been available for several years, but they are very gradually gaining momentum in the library automation community. This issue's "Innovations Affecting Us" will explore several of the open source integrated library systems that are available.

What is Open Source?

"Open Source" refers to software that is free and makes available the original source code that underlies an application, allowing anyone to study and modify the original application.

Generally with open source a community of interested persons takes responsibility for the creation, continued development, and technical support for an application. Most open source software exists under a standard license agreement, such as the General Public License (GPL), which allows for use, modification, and distribution of open source software for free. Linux, an open source computer operating system, is a premier example of the open source approach to software development.

Open source software has several perceived advantages over commercial software:

1. Open source software can be refined to fit local needs. Because the source code is available, the development of the software is determined by the needs of the user, not a commercial vendor.

2. Open source software is free. Since there is no purchase price or maintenance fee, the only major cost associated with open source applications is local development.

3. Unlike commercial software applications, open source applications do not have any restrictions on use. Users can modify, use, and distribute the application as they see fit.

While open source applications certainly have some advantage over commercially vended software, there are also potential disadvantages of using open source:

1. Open source applications can have inadequate technical support for users. Many applications lack documentation, have limited documentation, or use documentation geared only towards software developers.

2. There can be unanticipated costs associated with the modification of open source software for local needs. Users may not anticipate extra work that may be necessary with open source software that would not be necessary with commercial software, which may be more complete.

3. Speed and scalability can also be of concern when using open source software. Sometimes the programming languages used for open source applications are not