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And They Were There -- Reports of Meetings -- 8th Annual Mid-South E-Resource Symposium

Sever Bordeianu

University of New Mexico, sbordeia@unm.edu

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a conversation with the Physics-Astronomy Department. Why are they not using the collection? What resources do they need instead?

While having complete runs of series is preferred, we discovered that too many series had parts that were never used. Cancelling low use standing orders and unblocking the series within our approval profile has allowed the selectors to purchase only the most relevant titles.

When we moved into our new library ten years ago, we created a very pleasant newspaper reading room to accommodate the heavy usage that we had in the old library. Today the paper usage has plummeted. Our holdings have decreased to a few local and popular dailies as the Internet has replaced the paper newspaper.

2) **Have a list of possible cancellations in advance.** Since many of the teaching faculty are not readily available during the spring or summer, it is essential to discuss the possibilities earlier in the year (though email has made it easier to stay in touch). While paper journals have been an obvious target, we have also reviewed and cancelled databases. The cost of interlibrary loan versus ownership should be considered.

3) **Wish lists.** While we have been able to support most of our faculty's individual book requests, we have not always had the funds to initiate the annual expense of journal subscriptions or electronic resources. Separate databases have been created for these formats. We ask that the faculty prioritize their requests. This allows us to add titles as additional money becomes available. Past interlibrary loan requests is almost always required before a new subscription is considered.

4) **Keep with the new technologies/trends in the profession.** It is important to periodically check to see if your vendors are giving you the best possible financial deal by comparing the rates of their competition, either formally with a RFP (if required by your state) or informally via sales visits. Is it time to outsource functions of technical services?

Having a tighter budget does have a positive side: it has forced us to become better managers of our library's resources. Anyone can spend money; only the creative can manage it successfully and keep your clientele happy.

Here's hoping that your budget news was good this year and may your favorite football team have a successful season. 🍀

And They Were There

Reports of Meetings — 8th Annual Mid-South E-Resource Symposium

Column Editor: **Sever Bordeianu** (Head, Print Resources Section, University Libraries, MSC05 3020, 1 University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM 87131-0001; Phone: 505-277-2645; Fax: 505-277-9813) <sbordeia@unm.edu>

8th Annual Mid-South E-Resource Symposium, "Play Your Cards Right" — Mississippi State University Libraries, Mitchell Memorial Library, Starkville, MS, August 8, 2008.

Reported by **Cris Ferguson** (Electronic Resources/Serials Librarian, James B. Duke Library, Furman University) <cris.ferguson@furman.edu>

On August 8, 2008, **Mississippi State University Libraries** hosted the *8th Annual Mid-South E-Resource Symposium* at **Mitchell Memorial Library** in Starkville, MS. The theme of this year's program was *"Play Your Cards Right."* Drawing on the fact that this 8th annual symposium took place on 8-8-08, images of four playing cards with the number 8 on them peppered the program. Sponsored by the **Mississippi State University Libraries**, **EBSCO Information Services**, **Serials Solutions**, and the **North American Serials Interest Group (NASIG)**, there were 100 people in attendance at this year's symposium. The day-long workshop featured four speakers, each from a different walk of librarianship.

Jane Burke, Vice President and General Manager of **Serials Solutions**, gave a stirring, if somewhat unsettling, presentation on how the traditional library OPAC is headed towards extinction. Entitled "The OPAC is Dead; Managing the Virtual Library," her presentation emphasized the need for libraries to think both critically and creatively about the services they provide. Library collections are no longer destinations; libraries need to imbed their services where students are, such as in university courseware and in **Google**. **Burke** stressed that librarians should align their priorities and behavior with their reality. If the majority of the library budget goes toward electronic materials, then the majority of the library's manpower should go towards providing access to those electronic materials. **Burke** sums it up with this statement, "You can do anything, but you can't do everything." We need to carefully identify what our priorities are and make sure that the majority of our efforts are going towards those priorities.

In his presentation, "Publishers, Agents, Users and Libraries: Coming of Age in the E-World," **Dan Tonkery**, Vice President of Business Development at **EBSCO Information Services**, outlined the hand that has been dealt to each of the players (publishers, agents, users, and libraries) in the game of electronic resources. Ultimately, the users are the big winners in this game. The electronic content available to them is increasing exponentially, and there are a plethora of tools for searching and mining these electronic resources. Publishers are also fairing well; they are taking print content, repackaging it in an electronic format, and reselling it to libraries. (They are getting additional revenue without producing addi-

tional content.) Libraries are in a more difficult position. Users expect online access to everything they want and need, but they often don't understand the cost libraries incur to provide electronic access. In addition, **Tonkery** pointed out, many libraries are stuck with staff and workflows that are primarily geared toward supporting their print resources. According to **Tonkery**, the agents have drawn the Dead Man's Hand in this game. Agents have to adjust their own print-oriented workflows to adapt to electronic resources. The role of the agent is changing as libraries require assistance with authentication and registration of electronic resources.

Maria Collins, Associate Head of Acquisitions at **North Carolina State University Libraries**, spoke on the evolution of workflows within libraries. Her presentation "Evolving Workflows: Knowing when to Hold'em, Knowing when to Fold'em" outlined four phases for adapting workflows for the management and administration of electronic resources. First, she emphasized the importance of good planning prior to implementing any changes. She says, "Don't implement for implementations sake — understand what you will gain and what you have to give." The second phase, after planning, is the creation of efficient workflow strategies and processes through careful evaluation. **Collins'** third phase is the adjustment of staffing and other resources to accommodate the workflow. Lastly, she recommends the use of electronic resource management and communication tools, such as A-Z lists, link resolvers, ERMS, and MARC record services.

The last presentation of the day was "Promoting and Marketing E-Resources" by **Emily Alford**, Reference and Technology Librarian at **Michigan State University Libraries**. **Alford** highlighted a number of eye-catching ad campaigns, and encouraged librarians to think creatively when advertising their services. She emphasized the importance of branding library services to make sure that users know when a resource they are using has been paid for by the library.

A common theme across all of the presentations is the fact that many libraries have not been able to adjust their workflows as quickly as they have adjusted their purchasing habits. While libraries have been spending more money on electronic resources, many of the workflows within the library are still focused on print resources. Some suggestions that were made to improve workflow include eliminating check-in of print journals, ceasing the binding of print journals, cancellation of print sub-

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As I See It! — Abstracting and Indexing Services — The Ostriches of Information

Column Editor: **John Cox** (Managing Director, John Cox Associates Ltd, United Kingdom; Phone: +44 (0) 1327 861184; Fax: +44 (0) 20 8043 1053) <John.E.Cox@btinternet.com> www.johncoxassociates.com

Work as a consultant in scholarly communications follows many paths, and uncovers many perspectives. A recent assignment has prompted me to consider the longer term future of abstracting and indexing (A&I) services. My interest has been reinforced by the recent publication of two reports, one concerned with faculty use of the library as a portal, and the other on the routes by which readers navigate to scholarly content.

It seems to me that A&I services face a difficult and uncertain future. There are three reasons for this:

- ‘The **Google** effect’: the increasing use of **Google** or **Google Scholar**, and other general search engines;
- The discernible trend in scholars by-passing the library to find the information they require; and
- A&I services’ own business models, which are wholly focussed on the library market.

In a study published in September 2008, **Simon Inger** and **Tracy Gardner** reported on a survey of readers’ behavior in starting their research (**Inger S & Gardner T**, *How Readers Navigate to Scholarly Content*, www.sic.ox14.com/howreadersnavigatetoscholarlycontent.pdf, 2008). It revealed that usage of both generalist search engines and A & I services has increased, largely at the expense of library Web pages and OPACs. Where readers begin research with a literature survey, and search for journal articles on a specific subject, both A&I services and general search engines have become more popular than library or publisher Web pages.

A&I services provide a single stop for the key literature in any discipline, but no A&I service covers everything in the discipline. Most of them do not take the reader to interdisciplinary material that may well add insight to their research, while the generalist search engines may well do so.

Is this trend away from the OPAC and library Web pages significant? A report published by **Ithaka** in August 2008 pulled together two 2006 surveys, one of US faculty and the other of librarians (**Schonfeld R. & Housewright R.**, *Ithaka’s 2006 Studies of Key Stakeholders in the Digital Transformation in Higher Education*, www.ithaka.org/research/faculty-and-librarian-surveys, 2008). It reported that the profile and perceived relevance of the library have declined. There are considerable variations in faculty perception by discipline, but the general trend is that the perception of the library as the gateway to information has fallen, even though librarians still regard this role as very important. Faculty believe that their reliance on the library as the gateway will continue to fall. As a result, the library is becoming invisible. Libraries face a considerable challenge in marketing their relevance to their users. Researchers, especially in the sciences and in economics, look to other digital sources of information, and are by-passing the library.

If academic libraries are being by-passed by the very faculty that they serve, how are A&I services reacting? Well, most of them are doggedly adhering to the tried and tested mechanism of institutional pricing for academic libraries. They are not offer-

ing any alternative pricing schemes to reach markets outside the university and research library markets with which they are familiar. While they continue to pursue their core library markets, they ignore other users out there that might be prepared to pay for direct access if the price was right:

- There are professionals who operate outside universities who need access to published professional and research information. Many of them operate in small organizations — SMEs (Small and Medium-sized Enterprises) in Europe, SMBs in the United States. In the USA, there are 24.1 million firms employing fewer than ten people, of which 19.5 million have no employees other than the owners (www.census.gov/epcd/www/smallbus.html). In the UK, there are 4.4 million such firms, out of a total of 4.7 million firms of all sizes (www.berr.gov.uk); they include consultants like me. In both countries, it is the small firms that drive innovation and competition. If only a small fraction of these firms depend on their intellectual capital and specialist knowledge and expertise for their existence, they present a sizeable market for research information and for A&I navigation tools. Nevertheless, they are ignored by A&I services.
- There are also junior and community colleges (in the UK we call this sector ‘Further Education’). While these institutions are primarily involved in teaching vocational courses, some provide entry into the university sector, and many of their teaching staff might well have recourse to A&I services to locate relevant content in disciplines such as education, healthcare, basic engineering, business studies etc... But they cannot afford or justify high prices predicated on intensive usage in a university environment.

There are no pricing schemes for these ‘light users’. A&I vendors do not offer small institution rates, or ‘pay-per-session’, or short term access for less than a year. As a result, A&I vendors are ignoring — and losing — a range of customers that would find their products useful but only at a price that realistically represents value for money for them. Most vendors simply have not developed business models or mechanisms that would enable online purchase by individuals or small firms. Yet e-commerce systems and **PayPal** are commonplace. Access and authentication controls are highly developed. Book and journal publishers can sell any individual an eBook or a journal subscription at an individual (rather than an institutional) subscription price. Why not other information products?

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scriptions, elimination of claiming, and moving from Standing Orders to approvals.

On a personal note, attending the **8th Annual Mid-South E-Resource Symposium** at **Mississippi State University** was more than just a professional development opportunity for me; it was a homecoming. I was the Serials Librarian at **MSU** for two years, and I helped plan the 2nd and 3rd annual symposiums (which, back then, were called E-Resource Workshops).

Fresh out of graduate school, the Serials Librarian position at **MSU** was my first professional job, and it was there, under the tutelage of the Serials Coordinator, **Maria Collins**, that I first learned about the world of serials and electronic resources. (Yes, the same **Maria**

Collins that was one of the speakers at this year’s symposium. We had a nice reunion.) **MSU** is where I met my husband, **John**, who was the evening Circulation Supervisor at **Mitchell Memorial Library** at the time. Going back to Starkville for this year’s symposium was a little like going home, for both **John** and me. We were able to introduce all of our **MSU** friends and colleagues to our son, **Cullen**, and we were able to catch up with a lot of familiar and friendly faces.

I would personally like to thank all of the faculty and staff at the **Mississippi State University Libraries** who have had a hand in planning these symposiums over the years and who keep this program going year after year. They are doing good things down there in Mississippi, and I encourage *Against the Grain* readers to keep an eye on this highly worthwhile workshop in the coming years. 🐼