February 2007

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Recommended Citation

Liebert, Mary Ann (2007) "Op Ed -- The Devil Is In the Details," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 19: Iss. 1, Article 11.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.5232>

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Op Ed — The Devil Is In The Details

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If I were a serials librarian, I might think about applying to law school. The complexities of intellectual property will grow exponentially as open access, repurposing, and other issues related to sharing information are examined and challenged. It is not going to be as simple as advocates may wish, and, in fact, the costs associated with new agreements, patents, and copyright challenges will be substantial...and then some. Yep, intellectual property law...that's where I'd make a new career for myself.

When I read the discourses on the list serves and blogs, I am reminded of the fervor that often possesses mountain climbers. Some call it mountain madness; others call it summit fever, but it describes mountaineers whose drive to summit is so intense that they may, in fact, put the rest of their team in life threatening situations.

Not dissimilar to Open Access Fever.

The intensity of these online diatribes is most unsettling and because it obfuscates the need for a solid foundation of experience that proves that open access models are sustainable and affordable. The questions of whether these models are sustainable or affordable are largely swept under the rug, most likely because there is absolutely no good evidence that they are.

One has only to look at **PLoS** to comprehend that the open access model they espouse, the author funded model, has not supported their publishing endeavor. In spite of the fact that they have enormous and ongoing philanthropic support, **PLoS** has raised the author fees more than once, and unquestionably there will be more increases to come. The **Kroc Foundation** supported various disease research endeavors for many years, but when **Ray Kroc** passed away, his widow redirected the money toward social causes. **PLoS** is at the mercy of philanthropic good will and will likely have to remain so, but as history has shown, philanthropy is fickle.

It is wise to keep in mind **TANSTAAFL**, which is an acronym for the adage "There Ain't No Such Thing As A Free Lunch," popularized by science fiction writer **Robert A. Heinlein**, whose novel *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress*

discusses the problems that are caused when the eventual outcome of an unbalanced economy are not considered. This phrase and this book are popular with libertarians and economists. Perhaps we should be asking independent economists to look at the the real costs of proposed open access models and carefully examine the financial estimates and figures from **PubMedCentral**.

Because herein lies the real problem.

The reluctance to address the economic realities is typical of dreamers and social visionaries who speak from the heart; many of their motivations are laudable. Most of us would like to see that a health care system does not discriminate against those who are poor, those whose health makes them uninsurable, or those whose age discourages physicians from caring for them based on inadequate reimbursement. It is horrifying to see the conditions that exist in developing nations related not only to greatly inferior health care, sanitation, education, and housing. The list of social ills is an unending one.

But the desire to do good has to be matched with sound economic practice. Otherwise these goals will be defeated because they are not sustainable.

Affordability must be realistically addressed. The issue of affordability cannot be dismissed; otherwise this will be a disservice to librarians, to administrators and trustees, and to their constituents. Reality check: Institutions of higher learning are already grappling with enormous issues, including providing educational support for students who are unable to afford escalating tuitions, aging facilities, and unmet faculty needs.

These realities must be acknowledged, even by those whose well-meaning ideologies are prolifically focused on the goals of free and shared access to information.

But there is a cost to everything, regardless of ideology. Budgets need to be fully and correctly anticipated and when they are not, chaos results, cuts are made, and the results range from unpleasant to disastrous.

And speaking of disaster in the making, **President Bush** has recently proposed cutting the 2007 budget for the **National Cancer**

Institute (NCI) by almost \$36 million. According to the **Southwest Oncology Group**, which runs clinical trials, they have eliminated two of the ten cancers they have studied and they will no longer study head and neck cancers or sarcomas, tumors that arise from connective tissues. Another group has opted to stop studying brain tumors.

Let's get our priorities straight. Diminished research efforts have a real cost in human life and well being. We should all be most concerned about that.

The jury is out as to how open access costs will impact research at the bench in the long term.

It is alarming that at the root of the drive for open access is discord between librarians and publishers. The issue of journal pricing has probably been the greatest imperative for open access. An issue that publishers and libraries needed for a long time to discuss and respond to with better understanding, sensitivity, and new pricing policies. The issue of pricing is an issue that needed to be better addressed between the vendor and the librarian, and the Internet has enabled email, list serves, and blogs, giving the library community a much more effective voice. But now that the librarians have such a voice, why is it so limited to so few participants who address the same issues over and over and over?

We must know, and fully comprehend, who is going to pay for open access. As we see, research budgets and federal funding are already seriously threatened.

What is the **REAL** cost of **PubMedCentral**? Where is this money coming from within the **NIH** budget? If **President Bush** already thinks too much money is being invested in biomedical research, how can **Congress** allocate money to publishing? The argument that the cost of publishing is really part of the cost of doing research is specious. The federal government should not be mandating how research is communicated any more than it should mandate a ban on embryonic stem cell research. Think hard about the slippery slope of government intervention.

However, there seems to be plenty

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of money for public relations campaigns by all stakeholders, including, for example, the **PLoS** advertising and marketing budget that was close to a half a million dollars in 2004. **PLoS** is not the only group that has launched such campaigns; **SPARC** has been very aggressive, and now the **Association of American Publishers** has retained a public relations guru.

Thousands and thousands of dollars are being expended on the pro-con open access debate, and yet it has not been fully examined from a fiduciary point of view.

Without a sound fiduciary model that is sustainable, all the rest is an exercise of eloquent (and very repetitious) prose. And wasted money.

We do not know if the money for sustainability and affordability is assured. Who is going to demand that answer? Until we have long standing evidence of sustainable and affordable models, we have to be absolutely sure that ideological fervor does not overtake the realities of what all this will really cost, and, please.... Repeat after me, where will this money come from? And for how long?

Does the subscription system have flaws? Indeed it does. Should publishers and librarians still try to create a better system together while we grapple with the unknown? Indeed we should.

Beware of unintended consequences. It is well to keep in mind the phrase "Don't Throw the Baby out with the Bath Water." Credited to the first written occurrence in the satirical book, *Narrenbeschwörung* (1512), by **Thomas Murner** (1475-1537), a chapter is entitled such: it is a treatise on fools who by trying to rid themselves of a bad thing succeed in destroying whatever good there was as well.

Well said. And very good advice.

And remember to send for your application to law school. 🐼

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A longer term benefit of this approach is the development of understanding and familiarity between **MASU** staff and content producers. It is hoped these relationships will increase their comfort with approaching **MASU** for future assistance or advice regarding metadata or cataloging. Moreover, it provides a tested model for working with content providers outside the library, say the engineering faculty, who want to contribute materials to the **DAMS** for safeguarding.

MASU is confident our extensible normalization approach meets the needs of aggregating legacy data while remaining flexible enough to evolve along with the changing needs of the **DAMS** and the **UCSD Libraries**. 🐼

ATG Special Report — Cataloging eBooks: an Overview of Issues and Challenges

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Web-based eBooks have become popular with a wide variety of library users and are an increasingly important part of libraries' collections. eBook content now encompasses databases of retrospective eBooks (such as *Early English Books Online* or *Literature Online*), aggregated packages of relatively current content from multiple publishers provided by an eBook vendor (such as **NetLibrary** or **ebrary**), and titles offered directly from the publishers (such as **Springer** and **Elsevier**). As the volume of eBook content grows, libraries are grappling with how to integrate this content into their online catalogs. Librarians trying to provide title-level catalog access to their eBook collections must answer multiple questions to determine optimal workflow. Questions include:

- Where will the record come from?
- Can the eBook records be processed in batch?
- Should electronic holdings be placed on the same record as print holdings?
- What changes will need to be made to vendor-supplied records?
- How can the records remain accurate as titles are added and subtracted to eBook collections?
- Should holdings be added to **OCLC**? Why or why not?

At the **University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill University Libraries** we have been analyzing the issues raised by these questions to figure out how to provide the best access to our growing number of eBook collections. This article does not purport to be able to answer all of those questions, but rather introduces them as a series of topics that librarians will need to address when adding eBook records to their catalogs.

Although many eBook collections offer their own search mechanisms, having individual title records for eBooks in the OPAC provides library users with a single discovery tool for eBook titles across all collections and allows users to simultaneously view the library's print and electronic holdings. Initial studies of eBook use, mainly looking at **NetLibrary** content, have demonstrated the importance of catalog records in enhancing use to electronic books (for example see **Dillon** 2001; **Gibbs** 2001; **Langston** 2003). In a particularly dramatic example at the **University of Rochester**, the use of the **NetLibrary** eBooks increased by 755 percent when comparing use in the five

months before and after loading the catalog records (**University of Rochester Libraries** 2001). Later studies of eBook usage have taken title-level catalog records for granted, when comparing usage of print and electronic counterparts (**Christianson** and **Aucoin** 2005; **Littman** and **Connaway** 2004).

Despite the preponderance of evidence supporting the need for access to eBooks through the catalog, many libraries have been quicker to purchase eBooks than to provide title-level access through the OPAC. Several issues have contributed to this delay in cataloging. Acquisitions and cataloging workflows have been developed around the processing of physical items, generally on a title-by-title basis, while eBooks are intangible objects that have frequently been made available in large collections that could overwhelm a cataloging department. Staff may still have a "print is primary" mindset, and view electronic resources as supplementary, rather than as a core part of the library's collection. Additionally, eBooks may only be available on subscription, rather than owned, and titles may be swapped in and out as new material becomes available in large collections. Finally, cataloging standards for electronic resources have been subject to multiple revisions, making libraries reluctant to spend time and resources creating catalog records that will need to be updated.

Fortunately, as eBooks have become more widespread, so has the availability of **MARC** records for individual titles, frequently from the vendor. One of the first questions librarians must consider is whether to use vendor-supplied records for eBook collections. Records may be free with the purchase of the resource, available for a fee through **OCLC's Collection Sets**, or available for purchase separately from the vendor, with price and quality of records varying widely. These vendor-supplied records free the library from having to provide title-by-title cataloging, and may be loaded quickly into the catalog; however, there is still work to be done at the library's end.

Librarians must scrutinize the records carefully for quality and ensure the records correctly represent the titles the library purchased. Given the size of some eBook collections, it may not be possible to examine each record, but it is important to at least spot check records or to examine a selective sample for quality and accuracy. To date, vendor records have typically treated eBooks as electronic

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