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Issues in Vendor/Library Relations -- eBooks

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which involves “the translation of traditional print products into electronic formats,” is well advanced, as the *Report* notes (on p.8). But “the second stage of the transformation — the creation of new product types enabled by digital technologies — has just begun.” **Project Muse** is a prime example of a **Mellon**-funded experiment that succeeded in the first stage. Examples of the second stage, also funded by **Mellon**, include the **ACLS History (now Humanities) E-Book Project** and **Gutenberg-e**, but these, the *Report* observes, have only met with “mixed success” (p.14) and are not clearly sustainable over the long haul without continuing subvention. Thus the vision of **Cornell** librarian **Ross Atkinson** (as presented in his article in the May 1993 issue of *College & Research Libraries*) who foresaw the possibility of hierarchically layered texts (a document structure he called “concentric stratification”) arising from the use of the new technologies — has not yet been fully realized. This notion was adopted by **Robert Darnton** in his widely cited *New York Review of Books* essay, “The New Age of the Book” (March 18, 1999) — alas, without attribution to **Atkinson** as its source — and it became the inspiration for both the **ACLS Project** and **Gutenberg-e**, which **Darnton** was instrumental in getting funded and launched during his tenure as President of the **American Historical Association** — and also for the experimental multilayered electronic book that **Darnton** is under contract with **Columbia University Press** to publish himself. Such creative full use of the potential of the new technologies to produce digital works that can have no exact counterpart in the analogue world, as we have already learned, can be enormously expensive in both time and money and may be beyond the reach of a self-sustaining scholarly communication system. We may have to content ourselves with the occasional high-profile experiments carried out by dedicated pioneers like **Edward Ayres**, who birthed the justly lauded **Civil War** project called the **Valley of the Shadow**. But, short of such ambitious undertakings, there is still plenty that presses can do to move farther along the path of the second stage of transformation, especially in the creation of hybrid texts conjoining print products with online ancillary materials that can enhance the evidentiary and documentary richness of the monographic literature without going the full distance toward **Darnton**’s (and **Atkinson**’s) ideal.

While acknowledging the major role that **JSTOR** has played in the first stage of transformation and thanking **Kevin Guthrie** for suggesting a catalytic role for **JSTOR** to play in the next stage, one should also realize that another **Mellon**-funded venture, **Project Muse**, is perhaps in an even better position to provide the recommended platform, if only because it is structured to provide access to current journal content, with no “moving wall.” Indeed, some directors of presses that are members of **Muse** including myself have proposed to **The Johns Hopkins University Press** that it contemplate

adding monographs to its already rich database of journal literature in the humanities and social sciences, and the proposal is currently under consideration. A collaboration between **Muse** and **JSTOR** to which many presses also belong could potentially provide the best of all possible worlds, enabling access to older literature through **JSTOR** and current literature through **Muse**, seamlessly connected through **Cross-Ref**-type hyperlinking to new monographic content employing DOIs to the chapter level. There is no coherent intellectual justification for the present compartmentalization of the journal and book literature. The behavioral changes in scholars’ ways of accessing and using content, which the *Report* usefully summarizes, will inevitably demand closure of this unfortunate “digital divide,” which currently segregates the bulk of monographic content in printed books with circulations numbering in the few hundreds from the vastly more accessible content in journals, fast becoming even more accessible as the “Open Access” movement encourages the growth of more journals free to end users.

The alternative to universities not soon taking the initiative to close this digital divide themselves is the prospect of well-financed commercial publishers entering this space. Indeed, as the *Report* notes, **STM** publishers like **Elsevier** and **Springer** are already embarked on the effort to add books to their journal collections in science, while **Amazon** and **Google** are both gearing up to sell book content online. The path is already being laid in the social sciences by **Wiley/Blackwell**, whose creation by merger the *Report* announces as an example of the increasing consolidation of the industry into a few gigantic players but whose recent acquisition of **AnthroSource** from the **American Anthropological Association**, formerly published through the **University of California Press**, occurred after the *Report*’s

release — but should constitute a loud warning shot across the bow for all press directors and university administrators. In a section headed “Flight to scale threatens all but the largest publishers,” the *Report* observes that “through their scale, fiscal health, and access to capital markets, the largest publishers (most of which are commercial) are able to offer more generous terms and better services...to scholarly societies and authors for the rights to publish their work” (p.8). But there is a down side to commercial dominance of scholarly publishing: “the commercial publishers are pursuing different objectives that may not lead to desirable outcomes for universities; for example, universities have an interest in exploring ways to use new technologies to reduce costs of publishing so that the monograph continues to be a viable format for new authors and those in less mainstream fields. Commercial publishers are focused instead on maximizing scale” to achieve greater profits for their shareholders (p.21). This is hardly the first time such a warning has been issued. A full decade ago, at a conference co-sponsored by the **AAUP**, **ARL**, and **ACLS**, I urged universities to take the initiative in developing innovative new business models for digital publishing lest for-profit companies enter the arena and replicate the now much bemoaned monopolization of **STM** journal publishing: <http://www.arl.org/resources/pubs/specscholmono/thatcher.shtml>. **Ross Atkinson**, way back in 1993, envisioned the use of new technologies to bridge the gap between journal and book content in creating multilayered documents. We would do well to work together within universities, drawing on our own collective pool of talents, to develop that vision into a reality, rather than once again allowing adventurous and nimble-footed commercial publishers to create new monopolies, which in the end will cost all of us dearly. 🌱

Issues in Vendor/Library Relations — eBooks



Column Editor: **Bob Nardini** (Group Director, Client Integration and Head Bibliographer, Coutts Information Services) <bnardini@couttsinfo.com>

The biggest success story of the past ten years in academic libraries, without a doubt, has been eBooks. This may surprise many readers, but when seen in the right light, there’s no contest.

Nobody knows how many eBooks there are. It’s hard to find out when a new one becomes available, and when it does, it might be a new title and might be an older one. Then, there’s no consensus on how to budget for them, on how to buy them, on who should buy them or who to buy them from, on how much they cost, or if it’s best to buy one-at-a-time or in bulk. Then, there’s the option not to buy at all, but to subscribe instead. Once acquired, the workflows to receive eBooks, pay for them, and make them available to users are being made up

on the fly. Nobody’s quite sure if eBooks go out of print, or if they do, what that means.

None of us even knows how to spell the word. We go with our own favorite variation and really, who’s going to call you on it? How could they? Is it eBooks? Or e-books? Ebooks? E-books? ebooks? There’s a good argument in favor of each one. Non-argument, really, since what is there to argue about? You could argue, on the other hand, whether or not these things are books in the first place. Maybe we’re using the handiest word stem available only because we don’t have a better one.

There’s always a breakthrough eBook reader on the horizon, but so far nothing has broken through. The one thing everyone agrees on is

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that nobody wants to read an eBook on a computer screen; but for the most part now, there's little other choice. How readers use eBooks, or even how eager they are to have eBooks in the first place, good questions both at the moment. User models set by the publishers are all over the place.

Preservation is an open question. Cataloging is a problem. Collection development principles are, shall we say, nascent. Vendors and publishers think there's some money in eBooks, but at this point have quite a few examples to ponder to the contrary.

Today's infrastructure for eBook commerce resembles the infrastructure of one of those fast-growing exurban Sun Belt areas where before your eyes you can see the world being remade every day, remade with little to no help from professional planning or even from zoning. Where *does* that new highway lead to, does anyone know?

Despite all barriers to buying them, librarians buy eBooks anyway. In fact it would be hard to find an academic library without eBooks in the collection. One way or another, whether due to a **netLibrary** buy, a publisher deal, a collection of historical texts, a consortial bargain, or something else, eBooks are everywhere. They are a huge success, nearly miraculous.

Imagine where they'd be if we'd had it all figured out by now.

As it is, even in libraries who know it's full steam ahead with eBooks for them — in fact especially for these libraries — the next problem is, who in the library buys them?

Serials librarian and serials vendor may find themselves conspiring to capture the deal, and they may be up against book vendor and monographs acquisitions librarian down the hall trying to devise an angle of their own. Upstairs an assistant director looking to deepen ties with a consortium is on the phone with the director of that group. Another assistant director, meanwhile, favors a publisher who is offering a strong science package. Most selectors are looking for the smallest possible package of eBooks, since they have enough to do in the first place, and the head of public services leans toward the platform taught in BI all term long anyway.

Who gets to buy the eBooks is a function, of course, of who they are bought from. Or is it the reverse? Hard to tell, it's a real chicken and egg. The one sure thing is that there's hardly a library vendor rep of any kind out there today who doesn't have a **PowerPoint** on the laptop ready to fire up and present their eBook offering to any and all librarians with the time to watch and listen. The night-before routine is the same for all these reps. Open the laptop, find the folder, find the file, change the first slide, and let the eBook bullets roll, whether book vendor, serial vendor, database vendor, aggregator, publisher, or consortial staff member. There must be a lot of librarians that could give a pretty good rendering of a pitch themselves, having seen the show so regularly.

If who gets to buy the eBooks, and who to buy them from, are thorny questions, another is the matter of budgeting for eBooks. Are eBooks an ongoing commitment, that is, a serial? Or are

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eBooks a one-off purchase, that is, are they books? Or are they really an “electronic resource?” The book budget has been raided to pay for serials so routinely for so long it's always a temptation to pay for them that way, especially since they might be books anyhow. But there seems to be a bedrock level of support for print books that many libraries reached some time ago, and a good deal of resistance to dynamiting down any further. Then there's the serials budget, where libraries have learned the hard way over a generation what can happen when an ongoing commitment gets locked into the budget. Thus, less than universal buy-in to concede that eBooks are a serial. That leaves electronic resources, a budget line growing by leaps and bounds, and maybe a happy home for the eBooks, although the monographs and serials librarians might not see things in that light.

Finally, there's the weight of print. Print has a literal weight, of course. You can pick up a printed book, hold it, carry it, put it in your bag, make a stack of books on your desk. A big stack, on some desks, books as bookends even. Get together a little pile of as many as half-dozen or so and you can feel the weight of print. To carry them, you will need a bag of some sort. Books are substantial and they're also, on occasion, handsome, sometimes quite beautiful, to see and to hold. The look and the feel is different, new books, old books, books in between, there's even a certain smell, sometimes slightly intoxicating, that comes with the stages of a book's life and that may

— as we know from a famous book — leave the reader awash in memory.

If a stack of books on a desk — the titles themselves, the way they are arranged, the signs of use or disuse — say something about the interests, and intellectual weight, and even personality of the desk occupant, row upon row, floor upon floor of shelved books do that for a library. Now we're talking about cultural weight. Print books, heavily used or seldom used, no matter, will have a constituency on campus. Other than some librarians, eBooks will not. You can't see them (well OK, log on and you can, in a sense), hold them, smell them, carry them. No one has formative memories of eBooks. No one devotes rooms to them at home, no one lines an office with them, no one collects them, authors don't sign them, bookstores don't display them, at bedtime no parents read them to kids — eBooks have no cultural weight at all.

Why is it then, with so much going against them, have eBooks made their way into nearly every library collection? And why does everyone feel we've reached — now that thanks to a more recent famous book we have the right phrase — a tipping point for eBooks?

Well, for one thing you might say that librarians gave print books a chance and they didn't work. Research libraries in this country have stockpiled print books for decades and now what? The heart of the university? That's what librarians used to say all the time, and the books were a large part of the claim. Now, new buildings are designed in ways to keep the books out of view. Some directors

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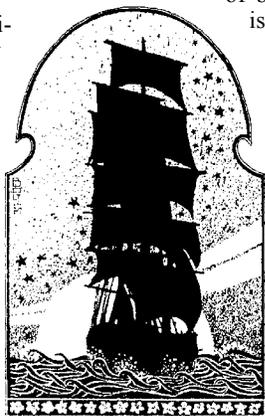
take a greater interest in remote storage facilities than they do collection development. And they have to: Where to put all those books that just might circulate one day? It's true that print books will always have a constituency; but equally true that today there are a lot of people on campus, some in high places, who would certainly not notice, would likely not care, and might even be delighted if some massive inter-library loan malfunction emptied the library of every last volume.

Always the very first criticism of eBooks is that nobody wants to read one from beginning to end. True enough, but somehow it's never mentioned, to balance the score, that as a rule nobody wants to read an academic library's print books cover-to-cover, either. That's not to say the books (some of them) aren't used. But, as opposed to what goes on in public libraries, scholars and students are much more likely, having checked out a book, to scan it, size it up, read a chapter or two maybe, check a reference, verify a fact, look at the bibliography, try to find some dimly recalled passage.

For these purposes, anyway, eBooks equal or better their print forebears. Especially when you haven't visited the library lately and might prefer to do your work from home or office or dorm, or while sitting in a café. Even for other uses, where print is superior, superior still to have eBook available too, for subsequent scanning, checking, verifying, finding.

And speaking of cafes, remember all that cultural weight of the print books? How will the books weigh in on that scale after we have a solid generation or so of students accustomed to walking into a library building and the only books in sight are the ones the people sitting around drinking coffee have with them at the moment? And for whom the digitization of every book in the world will not seem an astounding vision, but the way things always were, about as remarkable as color television? The amazing thing for this cohort will more likely be to hear that the print originals for these online works are all still around, somewhere.

And, that there used to be some doubt, and even debate, about the eBooks. 🐼



International Dateline — Usage Statistics for Online Books: What Counts?

by **Dr. Peter T. Shepherd** (Project Director, COUNTER Online Metrics, Project COUNTER, 39 Drummond Place, Edinburgh EH3 6NR, UK) <pt_shepherd@hotmail.com>

Release 1 of the new **COUNTER Code of Practice** for online books and reference works was published in April 2006, and marked the first expansion of **COUNTER's** coverage beyond journals and databases. This **Code of Practice** was developed with input from a task force of librarians and publishers with expert knowledge of books and reference works and is the first attempt to introduce a comprehensive industry standard for the recording and reporting of online usage data for these products. In order to facilitate both vendor compliance and library assimilation it was decided to make its overall format and structure consistent with the existing **COUNTER Code of Practice** for journals and databases. Only the content of the usage reports has been changed and the set of definitions of terms expanded. The specifications for report delivery, data processing, auditing, and compliance are identical to those that have already been shown to work in the **Code of Practice for Journals and Databases**.

One of the main challenges we faced in developing this new **Code of Practice** was the lack of consistency among publishers in the ways in which they define, structure and distribute online books. In the case of online journals there was a broad consensus that the most important content unit whose usage should be measured is the full-text article. Even before **COUNTER** most journal publishers were measuring downloads of full-text journal articles. **COUNTER's** main role was to ensure that they all did so using the same standards and protocols. For books no such consensus existed. Some publishers make online books available only as a single file that can be downloaded in its entirety, with no further vendor monitoring of usage being possible. Other publishers allow the downloading of individual chapters or entries, such as dictionary definitions or chemical structures. We felt it was appropriate to cover both these scenarios in the **Code of Practice** and this is reflected in the Usage Reports listed below. We also felt that the best way to encourage an informed debate what constitutes a meaningful measure of online book usage was to publish Release 1 of the **Code of Practice** with a limited number of core usage reports, obtain feedback how they work in practice, and include further enhancements in subsequent Releases.

The full text of Release 1 of the **COUNTER Code of Practice for Books and Reference Works** is freely accessible on the **COUNTER Website** (http://www.projectcounter.org/cop/books/cop_books_ref.pdf). Its main features are summarised below.

1. Definitions of Terms Used

The original **Code of Practice for Journals and Databases** contains an extensive list of data elements and other terms used in the usage reports and other parts of the **Code**. Where possible, existing definitions from **NISO**, **ISO**, **ARL** and other organizations have been used. Among the terms defined are "Vendor," "Aggregator," "Search," "Item request," "Consortium" and "Consortium member." This comprehensive list of definitions is proving to be a useful industry resource and is becoming more and more widely used for purposes not directly related to **COUNTER**. It has now been expanded to cover books and reference works. New definitions include:

- **Chapter:** A subdivision of a book or of some categories of reference work; usually numbered and titled.
- **Entry:** A record of information in some categories of reference work (e.g., a dictionary definition).
- **Reference Work:** An authoritative source of information about a subject: used to find quick answers to questions.
- **Section:** A subdivision of a book or reference work (e.g., Chapter, entry)

As with journals and databases, where an appropriate existing definition exists this has been used and the source, such as **NISO** (the **National Information Standards Organization**) cited. The other definitions have been developed by the books task force, using a number of sources.

2. Usage Reports

The **Code of Practice** provides a set of six basic usage reports that cover full-text requests for a whole title, as well as for sections (chapters, encyclopaedia entries) within a title. Searches, sessions and turnaways are also covered. These reports are:

- **Book Report 1:** Number of Successful Title Requests by Month and Title
- **Book Report 2:** Number of Successful Section Requests by Month and Title
- **Book Report 3:** Number of Turnaways by Month and Title
- **Book Report 4:** Number of Turnaways by Month and Service
- **Book Report 5:** Total Searches and Sessions by Month and Title
- **Book Report 6:** Total Searches and Sessions by Month and Service

The report formats, data processing guidelines and delivery protocols are exactly the same as those already in use for journals and databases. Likewise, searches, sessions and turnaways have been defined in the same way as for journals and databases and the usage reports relating to these (3, 4, 5 and 6 above) parallel those for journals and databases.

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