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The Persistence of Perception

by **Glenda Alvin** (Coordinator, Collection Management, Tennessee State University)

Tennessee State University, along with several other historically Black institutions, was founded as a land grant college in 1890. It began its academic life in 1912, as a "normal" school for descendants of Africans brought to America, usually aboard slave ships. It opened its doors to students as **Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial College** in 1927 and earned a reputation throughout the region as a teachers' college. Due to the achievements of **Wilma Rudolph** and the **Tigerbelles Track Team**, who earned several gold medals in the Olympics and the notoriety of **Ed "Too Tall" Jones** of **Dallas Cowboys** fame, the school gained a lot of recognition for its athletic programs in the 1960's and 1970's.

Along the way, **Tennessee A & I** underwent several changes that culminated into its transition to **Tennessee State University** including a court ordered merger with the **University of Tennessee** at Nashville in 1979. Today, **TSU** has two campuses and five colleges: **The College of Engineering and Technology**, **The College of Arts and Sciences**, **The College of Business**, **The College of Health Sciences** and **The College of Education**. It also has three schools: **The School of Agriculture and Consumer Sciences**, the **School of Nursing** and the **School of Graduate Studies**, as well as an Institute of Government which grants graduate degrees in Public Administration.

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study suggests that significant deficiencies in collecting gay and lesbian material will be found by at least some of the libraries that decide to undertake the recommended self-study.

Endnotes

1. Cornel West, *Black Sexuality: The Taboo Subject* in *Traps: African American Men on Gender and Sexuality*, ed. Rudolph P. Byrd and Beverly Guy-Sheftall (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2001): 301-307.
2. Delroy Constantine-Simms, ed., *The Greatest Taboo: Homosexuality in Black Communities* (Los Angeles: Alyson Books, 2001).
3. Cf. Terry Rowden, "African American Gay Culture" in *Gay Histories and Cultures: An Encyclopedia*, ed. George E. Haggerty (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000), pp. 19-20 and cross references; Cheryl Clark "African American Literature" in *Lesbian Histories and Cultures: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Bonnie Zimmerman (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000), pp. 9-12 and cross references.
4. Timothy F. Murphy, ed. *Reader's Guide to Lesbian and Gay Studies* (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 2000), pp. 12, 13, 16-17, 18, 20, 266.

The **Brown-Daniel Library** on the Main Campus was built in 1977, and like many state university libraries, its book budget flourished in the 1960's and 1970's, allowing it to purchase multiple copies of many titles. However, as the state's budgets decreased in later decades, its allocations to **TSU** dwindled and the university, in turn, gave smaller allocations to the library for books and other resources. By 1996-1997, the library had a state allocated book budget of \$97,803.20 and after gift funds and carry overs from deposit accounts with book vendors were added in, the total came to \$151,969.94. This was the amount that the library received to support nearly 40 majors, including several masters programs and at least two doctorates. It had a very limited number of basic databases such as **ERIC**, **InfoTrac**, **OCLC Firstsearch** and **H.W. Wilson CD-ROMs**.

Needless to say, the library was battling spiraling prices for books and periodicals and therefore, could not afford to purchase sufficient books or pay for new periodical titles to effectively support the expanding curriculum and meet the needs of approximately 8,000 students. Classroom faculty routinely told their classes to visit other area libraries such as **Vanderbilt** or the **Public Library of Nashville** in order to locate the information needed for their research. Many of the faculty failed to visit the library on a regular basis to become familiar with new resources and services or schedule their classes for library orientation.

During 1998-1999 the situation changed dramatically. The university underwent a self-study as a part of its preparation for the renewal of its accreditation by the **Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS)**. The **Brown-Daniel Library's** longtime Director of Libraries and Media Centers, **Dr. Yildiz B. Binkley**, used this opportunity to draw attention to the library's limited space, precarious funding, and the need to update the collection. The next year, the book and periodicals budget was doubled and it has been over \$1,000,000 in the years following.

This has allowed the book collection to flourish. Not only did we update the collection with new titles, but we were able to do some retrospective purchasing and fill in gaps from previous years using **Choice Recommended Titles** lists, **OCLC/Amigos Collection Analysis CD** and other bibliographies. The university has aggressively sought funding from Title III, a government grant that supplements historically black colleges and universities. Under **Dr. Binkley's** leadership, the library has been successful in gaining Title III multi-year commitments for the purchase of databases, microfilm, and expensive journals, which support graduate programs in the fields of biology, agriculture, and nursing.

The university's allocation for the library's book budget is now more than four times what it was during 1996-1997 and 75% of the budget is allocated to the academic departments for

faculty selection.

In addition, to our print collection of more than 437,000 book titles and 1,520 active serial subscriptions, we also have eBook collections such as **Netlibrary**, **Safari Books** and **Books 24/7**. We subscribe to 136 databases, funded from a million dollar budget. The Library has an active library liaison program and encourages department chairs to hold at least one faculty meeting a year in the library's Smart Classroom and schedule a library orientation on the agenda. We offer an orientation for faculty at the annual Fall Faculty Institute, as well as a library orientation for new faculty, once the semester gets underway. We also visit department chairs and departmental meetings. We provide off campus access to all of the library's resources, including items in Special Collections Department, which has had a digitizing program since 1996. Yet, we still find that some of our faculty continue to refer students to go to other area libraries, without bothering to check our holdings.

There are several key factors that contribute to the misperception that we have a less viable book collection than some of our area peers. Older faculty refuse to relinquish the impression that our collection is still inadequate. They seldom visit the library and will not browse our Website. Newer faculty will send orders for books we already have in the collection and have been there for quite some time, because they refuse to check the online catalog. They simply assume that the books are not there. Newer faculty are also sometimes influenced by word of mouth from their colleagues and often do not take the time to come to the library. They would rather go straight to **Vanderbilt University** and try to use their collection. I also believe that there is a perception among a minority of our faculty, students and the public that because we are an **HBCU**, we are poor and simply cannot compete with the peer institutions in our area.

At the annual Fall Faculty meeting in August 1999, the library director requested a slot on the agenda to demonstrate our Web page. Afterwards, she received an overwhelming number of telephone calls from faculty who were not aware of the updated resources the library could offer. In the following years, the library faculty at **TSU** has been fighting an ongoing battle to market available resources and inform the university community that we have the means, materials, and expertise to meet their research needs. We advertise new services on the university listserv that goes to everyone on both campuses. We notify departments of new services that directly support their curriculum. We have had great success advertising our new

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organization, archiving and technical migration) in this area alone.

The second situation is where the institutional repository and the publisher hold different versions of the same content. That happens now when **Elsevier** journal authors post their version of a preprint or accepted paper on a local server. It is not the official journal PDF/HTML version that is available on **ScienceDirect**. The two versions can co-exist, perhaps a little uneasily but not terribly so. The publisher assures content integrity and should also ensure permanent archiving of the definitive version.

Some people look to a future where the institutional repository becomes the official place of publication and replaces the publisher. There are a lot of reasons why this vision is a long way from being fulfilled — if it ever will be. I recently looked at ten of the most recently released articles for seven of our journals well-positioned within their fields. For those 70 articles the authors came from 127 institutions in 28 countries. Besides universities there were government agencies, corporations, independent labs and hospitals. While the largest of these entities may have established an institutional repository, most have not and will not any time soon.

In addition, institutional repositories do not have the neutrality for discipline-based peer review. Nor is it how researchers think about seek-

ing out information. I openly acknowledge that researchers are not looking for “an **Elsevier** article.” (This point is vividly made, as someone said to me, when you think that no one goes into a music store thinking “I want to buy a Sony CD today.”) But neither are they looking for “a **University of Kentucky/Minnesota/California** article.” Yes, the leading research centers in a field will have their followers, but it is the journal that facilitates bringing everyone together.

And this is just looking at journals. What about the books that faculty write? Does anyone really think that institutional repositories should be the home for these as well?

What then of complementarity? I suspect that there are a number of ways in which publishers and institutional repositories could work together. **Clifford Lynch** has suggested (*ARL Biomonthly Report* 226) that we could look at datasets. Publishers have by and large not included large datasets in their archives, and probably we aren't the best ones to do this. But institutional repositories may be (assuming that there is no discipline-based archive already in existence).

Standards are another place where we have complementary interests. The DOI, for example, is now the standard for reference linking. DOIs should be used to link out from references in dissertations and technical reports. DOI look-ups are free, so this is something to be encouraged. Similarly, both institutional repositories and publishers can endorse **OAIS** for archival purposes.

That makes for a relatively modest Challenge No. 3 for 2004: look for ways to work constructively with institutional repositories. No nightmares here (but the year is young).

The final thing on my mind in the middle of the night — if not crowded out by funding and price model challenges, open access and (maybe once or twice) institutional repositories — is what role technological advances can and should play in product development. There is so very much we (advanced publishers) can do. What should we do — and can

we hope to recover our costs and even profit from enhancements?

This issue really brings the three preceding ones together, for it is a question of how to make future investments. Purchasing budgets are very tight. Author-paid publishing is essentially plain vanilla publishing: post an article, perhaps make links from the references, but that's about it. Institutional repositories are even more stark. One cannot expect that many will develop sophisticated data mining or data visualization tools, for example. (Which is not to say it cannot happen or is not already happening — far be it from me to underestimate the power of motivated grad students and faculty.)

We have reached the point where difficult decisions have to be made about what to invest in. In our case we have a group of sophisticated library customers who help us think through the options. That helps. But what are the risks, just as is happening in some cases now, that for all the benefit that can be seen in having access to a large corpus of electronic information, it may not be affordable, or we will have the same problem with technical features. They are nice, but there is no money to pay for them (i.e., for the publisher to recoup its investment). That's Challenge No. 4 for 2004: understanding how to make better decisions on product-related technology investments.

I could go on — customer service, for example. (Please don't groan.) We have five special task forces looking at that right now and as they are filled with competent people and well-motivated (i.e., the directive to get things right came from the very top), it will get done. Yes, I would like to hear any customer service concerns from librarians (k.hunter@elsevier.com), but this is not keeping me awake. I do believe in the power of miracles.

That is the beauty of being in Strategy rather than Operations: I have the option (and responsibility) to look at the big picture and pretend for a moment that the day-to-day problems will be handled. So think with me on big picture items as well, so we have new challenges to look forward to a year from now. 🍄

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course reserve system with **Docutek** and the relatively new “**Ask A Librarian**” online reference service has helped us open new avenues for reaching our users. We are trying to entice potential users to the library by enhancing our popular periodical browse area, establishing a Browsing Collection for books of popular interests, initiating a library book club, and maintaining an Art Corner for the display of local artwork. The Public Services Department is getting more involved in information literacy and has compiled several subject modules. In conjunction with the information literacy modules, the Library Director has requested that Deans and Department Heads allow librarians to come into their classrooms to teach course related bibliographic instruction.

We have also created a library committee that specifically deals with library public relations. Our librarians feel that the best way to combat the persistence of perception that our collection has insufficient resources is to take every opportunity to emphasize our capabilities. The perception of inadequate resources was not born in a day and it will not go away quickly. However, if we proactively seek means and methods for keeping our patrons informed about our services and the collection, the perception will gradually vanish. 🍄

charleston conference dates

future

Preconferences and Vendor Showcase

Main Conference

2004	3 November	4-6 November
2005	2 November	3-5 November
2006	8 November	9-11 November
2007	7 November	8-10 November
2008	5 November	6-8 November
2009	4 November	5-7 November
2010	3 November	4-6 November