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Back Talk -- Cloud Computing

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(Controlled Lots of Copies Keeps Stuff Safe) we work with libraries and publishers in an Open Access environment to keep multiple copies of e-journals and other forms of electronic content on “dark” servers, which can only be accessed when a journal stops being published. I spoke about this sort of library Cloud Computing at our **Leadership Institute** in Beijing. **HKU’s Library** is one of 11 libraries worldwide to have a **CLOCKSS** box in which the content is stored.

So, in the future when speaking of clouds, be gentle — most of the intellectual output of everyone in our university is now or will be in the cloud. ☁

Rumors
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one of our upcoming issues. <http://www.timberlinelodge.com/>

Oh! Y’all be sure and read the great **Forum** on this issue, p.8 & 10! It’s about what five prominent librarians (**Rick Anderson**, **Kim Armstrong**, **Steve Carrico**, **Tony Horava**, and **Tony Ferguson**) have to say about what they expect from their bookseller! We are interested in **doing more Forums on important topics** so — let us know if you have a topic to suggest! <kstrauch@comcast.net>

There is so much more to tell you but I am out of space! I am going to put the leftovers on the **ATG NewsChannel** under **Rumors**. BTW, have you been to the **NewsChannel** lately? There has been an interesting exchange there about **advertisements on Facebook**. www.against-the-grain.com/ ☁

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Back Talk — Cloud Computing

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Normally when we speak of “clouds,” the meaning ends up being negative. Sunlight grows things; sunlight is associated with bright and cheery things. Clouds, on the other hand, cloud or block out the sunlight. Cloudy days often mean rain, or in Hong Kong’s case, the air-born mega city muck that we too often have to breath and that we blame on factories in Guangzhou, sandstorms from the Gobi, the container ships coming to our port, or the idling air-conditioned cars, buses, and taxis that enable us to think we are living in Finland instead of south China. Then there are the phrases uttered by fathers the world over: “get your head out of the clouds” — which cross their lips when their child wants to study drama instead of business, or they want to take a summer job on a cruise ship instead of doing something useful like spending June to August with **Goldman Sachs** learning useful life skills.

Of course then there are phrases like “every cloud has a silver lining.” One of my favorites is a quote by someone named **Jason Hutchison**: “Eagles may soar in the clouds, but weasels never get sucked into jet engines.” <http://littlecalamity.tripod.com/Quotes/NOP.html>

But the word “cloud” is the new, hot thing in computing and libraries. I **Google’d** “Cloud Computing” AND libraries and came up with 375,000 entries and the suggestion that I also try Cloud Computing 2009; Cloud Computing and saas; google docs Cloud Computing; google apps Cloud Computing; Cloud Computing iphone; facebook Cloud Computing; Cloud Computing platforms; elastic Cloud Computing. We seem to be obsessed with the whole phenomenon. I must say, if we need to be obsessed with a computer science whiz-bang idea, I

much favor Cloud Computing over grid computing which I could never really envision.

Actually Cloud Computing isn’t new, but calling it “Cloud Computing” has given it new meaning and a way of talking about it. This topic came up at **HKU Libraries’** just completed **8th Annual Library Leadership Institute** in Beijing. This year it was organized in conjunction with the **National Science Library of the China Academy of Sciences**. See <http://lib.hku.hk/leadership/2010.html> for information about the **Institute**, speaker Powerpoints, and pictures of all the fun we had. But back to Cloud Computing; one of our speakers, **Ms Nieh Hua**, the Deputy Director of the **Peking University Library**, provided a useful primer on this topic. She noted that basically it refers to moving all sorts of services and content up into the cloud/the Internet and away from your desktop computer or the computer system of your organization. When you come to realize that is what is meant by Cloud Computing, you are tempted to say, “Oh, you mean relying upon the Internet for services and information, or what most of us do most of the time — e.g., I just went on the Web to find a florist in my mother’s home town in Massachusetts and ordered some Mother’s Day flowers; OR I just uploaded pictures of my vacation to Cambodia to **picasaweb.google.com** so that all my friends could see them; OR I just bought an **iPhone** by going to the **Apple** Website; OR my library decided to no longer host its

own servers to store data but instead use something like **www.rackspace.com** to arrange with them to keep my data “up there” in the cloud. Whether we call it Cloud Computing or doing business on the Web, it is pervasive in all aspects of our lives. Another of our **Institute**

speakers, **Andrew Wong** from **OCLC**, spoke about **OCLC’s** new **WorldCat Local**, another example of cloud computing in which common integrated library services are provided from the cloud, but mixed in with access to the information from online full-text and bibliographic content repositories.

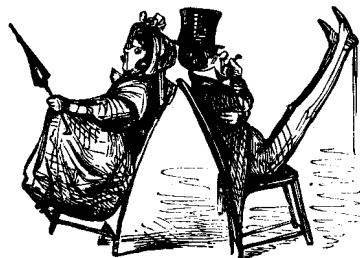
For libraries, we rely upon the cloud for almost all of the electronic content we provide to our readers. For example, while we do maintain a few servers to store a half-million or so Chinese eBooks and another half-million Chinese e-journals, we recently paid to access a collection of 800,000 **SuperStar** eBooks located on a server in Beijing — up in the clouds (For more details, see <http://www.aardvarknet.info/access/number52/month-news.cfm?monthnews=02>). Another example, when you go to our **Dragon** online catalogue in search of the journal “Accounting Forum” and then click on it to find an article, you are linked to a server somewhere else in the world — up in the cloud — to find what you want.

Of course paying for and relying upon content “up in the cloud” requires a whole new mindset about topics like the preservation of information. In the old days, 30 years ago, we paid for printed journal subscriptions, we got them in the mail, and we bound them in nice red or green bindings with gold lettering and put them on the shelf. When the auditor asked us to prove that we had what we paid for (like most libraries in those days we spent more than half of our budget on journals), we could point to the shelf. When the publisher decided to stop publishing the journal, we still had what we paid for on the shelf.

What happens when the journal content is up in the cloud? Like most other librarians I have tried to make it clear to faculty members, who trust what is on our shelves and not even what is on other libraries’ shelves, that we just need to rely upon the publisher to store and provide access to the content. Another common alibi is to point to shared printed repositories. Like other librarians worldwide, we here in Hong Kong are also working together to store at least one bound copy of all of all our journals in the **Joint University Research Archive (JURA)**, a 7.4 million-volume automated storage and retrieval warehouse which we hope to break ground on next fall. This cooperative activity is a global phenomenon. And, of course, since we librarians seem to have cooperative genes, we are busy cooperating on our cooperation. Recently, **CRL** has been bringing like minded librarians together to create a **CRL Print Archives Network** <http://www.crl.edu/news/6646> so that all of these archives are aware of each other.

In addition, however, we have a digital alternative to shared print archives up in the cloud: one in which **HKU’s** library participates is **CLOCKSS** <http://www.clockss.org/clockss/Home>. Another is **Portico** <http://www.portico.org/digital-preservation/>. In **CLOCKSS**

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