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At Brunning: People and Technology-At the Only Edge that Means Anything/How We Understand What We Do

Dennis Brunning

Arizona State University, dennis.brunning@gmail.com

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At the only Edge that Means Anything / How We Understand What We Do

by **Dennis Brunning** (E Humanities Development Librarian, Arizona State University) <dennis.brunning@gmail.com>

Where the Wild Things Are: eBook Summer 2010

Summer of 42 or Summer of the VuVuZela?

Compared to Summer 2009, a feast of e-reader and e-seller, where publishing's future teetered and tottered over the **Google Book Settlement** and each week it seemed brought yet another **Nook**, **Kindle**, **Sony**, **BeBook** reader device into market, this summer's pace is slower almost slow motion. Nothing has happened in the "settlement"; publishers push and shove at the negotiation table and in the blogosphere/news environment. Whither publishers? Whither authors? Whither librarians?

Oh, wait, **Amazon** announced a new **Kindle** model with 3G and WIFI at lower prices joining the already millions of units sold; it's also slimmer — yawn. But **Amazon** did announce **Kindle** sales had edged ahead of same-edition hard covers. And users of all devices have been seen enjoying eBooks in every nook and cranny of the connected world. Perhaps it is the summer of the VuVuZela for eBooks, a persistent, nagging hum that won't disappear.

Hmmm...let's explore the summer eBook world.

The Shape of Things to Come...

Google is betting the browser to become the de facto reading medium. As long as your device can run a Web browser **Google** will supply an electronic edition using the open source e-pub standard. The **Google Bookstore** will supply titles from the library digitization project, publisher-supplied content, and free Web content. **Google's** goal will be, as always, to match advertising to searches while helping users find books wherever they are sold on the Internet.

Over at **Apple**, **Steve Jobs** has bet the orchard on iProducts — primarily the **iPad** and **iPhone**. If you haven't had the chance, drop by your local trendy coffee/Internet hub and check out the over-caffeinated, always on **Apple** boys and girls, putting the collective finger to content on their iToys. It is quite the experience and impressive. Visually, **Apple** outshines **Kindle**. There are reading apps that display your books on virtual library shelves; with a light touch you can turn pages just as you would in its print doppelganger. Publishers can enhance the reading experience with elaborate zooming features and hyperlinking to secondary references.

Ironically many **iPad** users — who also like **Kindle** eBook pricing, catalog, and availability — use **Amazon's iPad** app for a very satisfying reading experience. The app is basically a rework of the **Windows** app for the **iPad**. Here **Kindle** content looks more like a book; there are few, if any, rendering issues that mar reading on the original device.

Yet with all this emphasis on device we may not want to lose sight of what is really going on. Your reader, whichever you choose, needs books,

and these books will be variously priced and may even offer an array of features. Plus, you got to get the books on and off your reader.

Your Links:

<http://tinyurl.com/27hw5ub> — *Wall Street Journal* best word on eBooks

<http://tinyurl.com/2dhh7w8> — **Jim Cramer's** the street charts the best e-readers

<http://bkrpr.org/blog/> — unpulp your pulp with this thing

Amazon owns a huge head start in selling eBooks. For several years now they've set the price and reading expectation. Moreover, they are keeping pace with the competition in lowering device price. And taking a lesson from publishers they are now signing exclusive publishing deals for electronic editions, having recently signed an agreement with author agent **Phillip Wylie** to be the distributor for major authors including **Mailer**, **Udike**, **Roth** — you know, what you read in 20th Century American Novel classes.

At the moment, no other online bookstore has the pricing, device simplicity, and exclusivity **Amazon** has set up.

So we know what **Amazon** is doing — making books on devices, content, and authors. When not apologizing for the **iPhone 4** antennae, we know that **Steve Jobs** is smiling all the way to the bank with million plus sales of the **iPad**. Owners have all the online media they want. They deserve this after forking over more than \$700 and waiting in real or virtual lines.

A lesson from all this: eBookstore may be as important as device.

We would be remiss to not mention **Book Liberator**. If you haven't heard of this personal book scanning machine, check it out. Designed as a less than \$350.00 (with camera) book scanner for your tabletop, its inventors and supporters feel it may turn the publishing world upside down. They propose to unpulp pulp.

It looks like a man-sized Rubic's cube without, well, the cubes. Or a magician's box with clear plexiglass sides. In essence, it is a book and camera stand fitted living inside a clear plastic box. The box lowers down on an open page and flattens it for photographing.

It is labor intensive. The operator must turn pages, raise and lower the box, and take a photo.

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Group Therapy from page 61

office supplies and printing for all faculty in that program. The library here does not allocate funds to individual program purchases due to the unpredictable nature of budgeting (especially recent annual cuts ranging from 10%-50%) and rapid shifts in demand due to program and curriculum changes, accreditation reviews, and so on. In those cases in which program funds are scanty and sudden demands

arise for materials, the library becomes the last-ditch resource for materials faculty members need urgently.

For other items going into the collection, blacking out codes or otherwise removing the online access information has not been part of our procedure during processing.

The librarians here conduct an annual review of the collection development policy, which includes a section on access to and processing of electronic resources. This issue will be added to our upcoming review. 🐼

Rumors from page 52

or is it heads? This is a very interesting column about the **ACM (Association for Computing Machinery) Special Interest Group for Computer Graphics**. What is the future of authored content anyway? See this issue, p.14.

Talk about keeping us on our toes/heads/or whatever! Read **Steve McKinzie's "590 Local Notes: Tenure for Academic Librarians: Why**

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Nine of ten librarians we've shown the video to believe this demo to be an April Fool's joke. Perhaps this trends down to the general population. Both librarians and nonlibrarians remark that it would take forever to scan even a small collection.

On the wild side, are librarians forever?

The Kindle (apologies to William Blake)

Kindle, oh my old Kindle, shining grayscale bright
Easy on our reading eyes
In the forest of e-ink night
What other reader device
Could give me so much convenient reading delight?
From what distant server
Flow your delicate pixels
From what dedicated provider
Wing your words?
Oh, right, Whispersync.
On what shoulder and what art
Could design your sleek and electronic heart?
And when did you begin to peak
Beyond hardcover sales, yes, this week
Publishing never will be the same.
What bookstore will thee drain
What author will thee reward or pain
And when print is set free through your \$9.99 fee
What publisher will flee thy agency?
When **Apple** and **Google** threw down their spears
And inundated **Random House** with fears
Did **Bezos**, did he smile with commercial glee
And add more discount to the pricing melee
Did he smile, did he smile?
Kindle, Kindle shining just right
In the forest of e-ink light
Will you forever be?
Will you last beyond your first battery?
Will it be for ten hours or maybe just three?
And vanquish to eternity what we are calling P?

1492 All Over Again

What is our off-season? Do we have an off button? How do we refresh?

While most professions view Summer as vacation, a time to renew, refresh, and relax, librarians, of all persuasions, traipse to unusually summery settings to review, recommend, and reveal to one another librarianship. We call this **ALA**.

ALA was all abuzz this summer about discovery services. Clearly, discovery will save the library. If you don't have it, well, you are so undiscoverable. It is the next best thing.

Or is it? **George Machovec**, managing editor of *The Charleston Advisor*, recently alerted us to a miniwar occurring in library cyberspace between some vendors about discovery services. Why were they clashing sabres?

From the war zone (aka The Charleston Advisor)...

In Q&A **Jane Burke**, CEO of **SerialsSolutions**, summoned troops (librarians it would appear) to the truly unified experience of the Ann Arbor via Seattle company's discovery services. Unlike competition, who **Burke** claimed still depended on federated search and merging results, **Summon** stood alone as preharvesting content to one index. This, **Burke** argued, had a tremendous impact on speed and quality of results. Moreover, it wasn't repurposed, it was new.

Understandably, **Burke's** competitors took issue with this king of the hill position. In letters to *The Charleston Advisor*, **Tim Collins**, President of **EBSCO Publishing** and **Nancy Dushkin**, Corporate Vice President for **Discovery & Delivery Solutions** at **Ex Libris** wrote, each at some length, contrarian views. Their voices blended into a singular, should we say, unified voice, that their indexes were equally one and unified across library content.

They did not, they emphatically insisted, miss the content harvest.

As for "repurposed products" **Collins** was direct. Based on usability studies and years of gathering customer feedback, **EBSCO** designed its discovery service to leverage a familiar user interface, their flagship platform **EBSCOhost**. The value of this, **Collins** maintained, provided users with a familiar interface, a no "retraining" product.

Collins went on to provide **Ms. Burke** with a teachable moment. For clarity's sake, he suggested a baseline definition of discovery service which is a collection of locally-indexed metadata available from a single search. **EBSCO Discovery Services** is exactly this and does not rely on federation. **Collins** goes on to wonder aloud if **Ms. Burke** is confusing **EBSCOhost Integrated Search** with **EBSCOhost Discovery Service**. **EIS** is for customers who want to add federation seamlessly to their overall solution. Why? Simple, not all content is available for the index.

Nancy shared **Tim's** concerns and mainly supported his themes — with examples from **Primo Central**. **Ex Libris** launched **Primo Discovery and Delivery Solution** after thoroughly researching end user needs. Like **Summon** and **EDS**, **Primo's** index covers scholarly materials shared by the global scholarly community and integrates searching this index across a library's services. Like any large-scale distributed system, it is quick and with relevance ranking and blending of results very efficient. It is, in just a few words, not federated searching.


With **Collins**, **Nancy** also noted not all collections are available for harvesting and indexing for several reasons including commercial considerations, compatibility issues, and other obstacles.

For a truly unified scholarly index, she concludes all publishers must come on board with centralized indexes.

So there it is, a fundamental truth in this discovery business. Unless all publishers come on board to expose (or disclose) meta-data, there just isn't going to be universal discovery.

However, each may have found a New World.

Your Links:

<http://www.charlestonco.com/>
<http://www.exlibrisgroup.com/category/PrimoOverview>
<http://www.serialssolutions.com/summon/>
<http://www.ebscohost.com/discovery/> 

It Has To Go (p.60). I was reading in *Inside Higher Education* (May 12, 2009) that only 39% of the faculty are tenured or on tenure track in 2007. Plus I just saw a brief news article in

the *Chronicle of Higher Education* that **Texas A&M** is starting to rate professors "based on their bottom-line value." Well, I disagree, but keep an open mind while you read. :-)
<http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2009/05/12/workforce>
<http://chronicle.com/article/Texas-A-M-System-Will-Rate/124280/>

Talk about squeezing the faculty. I had to smile when **Gary Geer** sent me a little "filler" for an issue of *ATG*. The "filler" was called "**Consistent Squeeze**" and for you new-timers that's how we ancient-timers used to know how many books we had in specific subject areas of the collection. That was back when there wasn't

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