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Preservation's Role in the Transition from Print to E-Resource Collections

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Against the Grain

“Linking Publishers, Vendors and Librarians”

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Preservation’s Role in the Transition from Print to E-Resource Collections

by **Patrick L. Carr** (Head of Electronic and Continuing Resource Acquisitions, Joyner Library, East Carolina University) <carrp@ecu.edu>

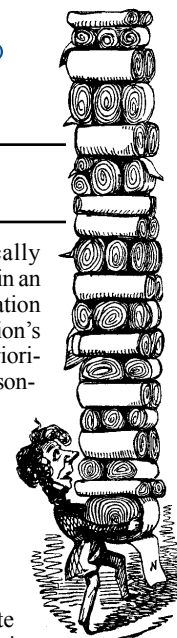
The transition of library collections from print to electronic formats has presented extraordinary challenges to traditional concepts of preservation. Although these challenges have been a point of emphasis within the profession’s literature and conference programs, I believe that the profession’s focus has often been distorted by a fundamental misconception that preservation is an end rather than a means. To see this misconception, you need only look at how libraries frequently opt to articulate their core missions as being two-fold: first, to preserve and, second, to provide access. For example, the **American Library Association** and **Association of Research Libraries** have purported that “The mission of libraries is to preserve and provide access to information, regardless of format.”¹ One result of such claims is the formation of what I have elsewhere termed the “dual mission paradigm.”²

Some would argue that purveyors of the dual mission paradigm don’t actually hold that preservation is an end in itself; instead, the argument goes, these purveyors are just trying to emphasize that libraries must preserve their collections as a means for the ongoing accessibility of those collections. But, regardless of what is meant, what is actually being said suggests that libraries have two missions, preservation and access. This lack of clarity in the language used to describe library missions has contributed to a corresponding lack of clarity in the profession’s thinking about the role of preservation in the emerging post-print era.

I believe that, too often, libraries pursue preservation of their e-resource collections (in particular, commitments to perpetual access provisions for new acquisitions) as an end in itself rather than as a strategy for providing access to patrons that are anticipated in the future. The result is that libraries often have

difficulty thinking critically about preservation’s utility in an emerging long-tail information marketplace or of preservation’s place among competing priorities for the allocation of personnel and funding.

I accepted an invitation to guest edit this issue of *Against the Grain* with the intention of shedding light on e-resource preservation’s proper role in an environment focused on seamless and immediate access. The issue includes six articles from authors representing a cross-section



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If Rumors Were Horses

As usual there has been a lot going on around us!

Was excited to learn that the hard-working, astute, and wonderful **George Machovec** is now **Interim Executive Director of the Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries**. The wonderful **Alan Charnes**, the Executive Director of the **Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries** since 1991 announced his plan to retire effective August 31. The **Alliance** was launched in 1974 by five library directors seeking ways to improve service through collaboration and resource sharing. **Charnes** is the second person to lead the **Alliance**, having succeeded **Ward Shaw**, **CARL**’s principal developer. You go, **George!**



Was surprised to learn that the handsome, debonair **ARL** Executive Director **Charles B. Lowry** is retiring in December of 2012.

This will give the **ARL** Board time to search for a new executive director and assure a seamless transition. You will remember that **Charles** was a Plenary Session moderator in Charleston in 2010 but, poor thing, was sick the whole time! He and wife **Marsha** were both sick. What a way to celebrate their anniversary in Charleston!

<http://www.arl.org/news/pr/lowry-22aug11.shtml>

Heard from one of my favorite old timers, **Tom Leonhardt** who has moved back to Eugene, Oregon. **Tom** is retired and loves it but he still sent a column with one of his earlier

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Preservation's Role ... from page 1

tion of communities with a stake in the evolving role of preservation in libraries. By considering the authors' varying perspectives, I hope that readers' views on e-resource preservation will be enriched with added depth and dimension.

T. Scott Plutchak (Director of the Lister Hill Library of the Health Sciences, **University of Alabama at Birmingham**) contributes an article prompted by the ten-year anniversary of **Nicholson Baker's** controversial critique of library preservation practices, *Double Fold*. **Plutchak** discusses the book's relevancy today and then expands to consider broader difficulties and opportunities associated with e-resource preservation.

Thomas Herron (Associate Professor of English, **East Carolina University**) offers a perspective that is too often absent from librarianship's professional literature. He gives a firsthand account of what a working scholar of English literature most values about libraries, and he shares his concerns about attributes that libraries risk losing as they transition their collections from print to online formats.

Wm. Joseph Thomas (Head of Collection Development, Joyner Library, **East Carolina University**) considers e-resource preservation from the hands-on vantage point of a collection development librarian. He discusses the rationale and processes by which his library uses online archival access to make decisions about print deselection. Further, **Thomas** advocates that libraries demonstrate and advance their investments in strategies for e-resource preservation.

Steven R. Harris (Director of Collections and Acquisitions Services, **University of New Mexico**) extends the focus on library collection development and preservation with a provocative but cogent proposal. He suggests that, in the post-print era, it may be time for libraries to abandon antiquated concepts of collection ownership in favor of demand-driven rentals of content.

Amy Kirchhoff (Archive Service Product Manager, **JSTOR & Portico**) addresses one of the most significant and pressing preservation challenges: the eBook format. She explains some of the distinct difficulties of eBook preservation and discusses solutions that **Portico** has developed for overcoming these difficulties.

Robert W. Boissy (Manager of Account Development & Strategic Alliances, **Springer Science + Business Media**) shares his perspective on e-resource preservation rooted in his experiences as a member of the publisher community. He traces the impact that the transition to electronic formats has had on perceptions of preservation responsibilities and describes how publishers and libraries are partnering to develop solutions to the many problems of preserving e-resource collections. 🌱

Endnotes

1. **The American Library Association and Association of Research Libraries**, "The ALA and ARL Position on Access and Digital Preservation: A Response to the Section 108 Study Group" (Nov. 9, 2006), www.arl.org/bm~doc/the-ala-and-arl-position-on-access-and-digital-preservation.pdf (Accessed July 3, 2011).
2. **Patrick L. Carr**, "The Dual Mission Paradigm: A Ranganathanian Critique," *Against the Grain* v.22, #6 (Dec. 2010-Jan. 2011): p.44-45.

Notes From Mosier — Of Buckeyes, the Y-Bridge, and Wrestling with Hogs

Some Thoughts On Library Innovation

Column Editor: **Scott A. Smith** (Kent State University) <scott.alan.smith@comcast.net>

In my last column I made mention of **Nettie Metcalf**, a Warren, Ohio resident who in the 19th century developed a breed of chicken known as the Buckeye. Buckeyes are indeed a rich mahogany color, and hence resemble the chestnut-like cousins of the state tree.

I bring this up because **Nettie** was responding to a challenge. Ohio can be cold in winter, and **Nettie** sought to develop a breed of chicken that could be better suited to the weather. Buckeyes have small combs — less exposed skin to freeze — and are feathered in such a way as to provide better insulation.

Nettie was, in a word, an innovator. She pursued a strategy hitherto untried, and the result is a breed still with us today.

Another notion of representing innovation occurs to me in a metaphor I can draw from my home town of Zanesville, Ohio. Bridge-building, bridging a gap, and other bridge-related ideas are often invoked to link different ideas, or suggest a need to move from one position to another. Most bridges are, by necessity and design,

linear. However, when confronted with the need to link three banks defined by the confluence of the Licking and Muskingum Rivers, the town fathers came up with the really quite elegant solution of building one bridge consisting of three spans which meet in the middle — thereby eliminating the need for three wholly separate structures. (Also, they set the stage for a long-standing local joke — when travelers ask how to find old route 40 out of town, they're told "go to the middle of the bridge and turn left.")

The Y-Bridge seems a more apt way of thinking about how libraries and the academy in general must try to navigate change — the issues aren't two-dimensional or linear; they're more complex.

All of this is to say we face times of elevated expectations, more robust competition, revolutions in content, discovery and delivery, reduced budgets, and stretched and stressed staff. Innovation needs to be genuine, not merely an exercise in re-labeling ourselves with more politically correct vocabulary. In the next few columns I'll be looking at how libraries are dealing with changes in acquisitions, collection development, and technical services. This seemed a good place to start.

Finally, on one more Ohio note: a part of wise leadership and planning is to consider one's resources, political capital, and current position, and choose one's battles carefully. Or, as my old friend and mentor **Charlie Coyle** was fond of saying, "Never wrestle with a hog. You and the hog will get dirty, but only the hog will like it." 🌱



Future Dates for Charleston Conferences

	Preconferences and Vendor Showcase	Main Conference
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2011 Conference	2 November	3-5 November
2012 Conference	7 November	8-10 November
2013 Conference	6 November	7-9 November
2014 Conference	5 November	6-8 November