Random Ramblings: One Small Step for Smashwords, One Giant Leap for Self-publishing

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I suddenly feel very uninformed about my current area of research expertise — self-publishing. In the last eighteen months, I put together a special section of Against the Grain on self-publishing, participated in a Charleston Conference pre-conference on the topic, and wrote a major paper on the bibliographic control of self-published materials for the 2014 IFLA Conference in Lyon, France. I follow multiple discussion lists for both public and academic libraries. During this time, I spent hours researching the topic, mostly on the Internet. One of the areas that I researched was the availability of self-published materials on eBook platforms. I found nothing until I saw the announcement areas that I researched was the availability of self-published materials from the Web, and discussion lists, libraries were suddenly feel very uninformed about my current area of research expertise — self-publishing. In the last eighteen months, I put together a special section of Against the Grain on self-publishing, participated in a Charleston Conference pre-conference on the topic, and wrote a major paper on the bibliographic control of self-published materials for the 2014 IFLA Conference in Lyon, France. I follow multiple discussion lists for both public and academic libraries. During this time, I spent hours researching the topic, mostly on the Internet. One of the areas that I researched was the availability of self-published materials on eBook platforms. I found nothing until I saw the announcement areas that I researched was the availability of self-published materials from the Web, and discussion lists, libraries were
budget or if their sales to date would justify additional advertising in the library marketplace, but they should consider this option if economically feasible. Finally, perhaps one of the public libraries that has integrated self-published materials into its collections could publish a use study. I would support doing so even if the study showed little circulation since such a study would at least answer my questions about the current importance of self-publishing for libraries. For this very reason, I eagerly await the two papers from public libraries that will appear in the University of Purdue Press volume mentioned above.

What Did I Learn?

Perhaps I’ve been too optimistic about the importance of self-published materials for libraries. With the general decline in library funding, public libraries may not yet be willing to take on responsibility for collecting in a new area that doesn’t conform to the traditional practices of collection development. On the other hand, I still find it hard to fathom that libraries can avoid forever over 50% of the titles published in the United States. I also continue to believe that library patrons won’t hesitate to ask their libraries to make available self-published materials that that they encounter on Smashwords, Apple iBooks, Amazon, Goodreads, readers advisory blogs, and genre discussion lists. The best thing that might happen would be for Amazon to tempt a best-selling author to self-publish a novel that makes it to the top of the New York Times best-seller list so that public libraries couldn’t refuse to buy it. Overall, $4.00 per title seems like a great way to offer a large amount of additional content to fill the wants of voracious fiction readers. Maybe the tipping point for self-published materials is farther away than I thought, but I’m patient enough to wait.

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on the ATG NewsChannel — “Americans still spend just as much on print books as eBooks.” This article presents Bureau of Labor Statistics charts showing the breakdown of consumer expenditures on books and other reading materials by age of reference person. Fascinating.


Hey!! Did y’all see that there is a new TV series called The Librarians. Voice over: “humanity’s end begins at the library” is the mysterious lead in… TNT premier December 7th. We don’t watch much TV but this is something to keep an eye on definitely!

http://www.imdb.com/title/tt3663490/

LJ just published an interview with Sam Brooks, Executive Vice President at EBSCO, and Allen Powell, President of the EBSCO Subscription Services division about the Swets bankruptcy, see http://www.infodocket.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/140925_LJ_ EBSCO_SWETS.pdf.

William G. Bowen’s talk on October 13, at Rice University’s De Lange Conference is presented in Ithaka’s S+R’s recent Issue Brief introduced by the awesome Deanna B. Marcum. To quote Ms. Marcum: “William G. Bowen, president emeritus of both The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and Princeton University, argues that we are not doing well on several fronts: the rate of higher education degree attainment has been near stagnant for the past 40 years; the time it takes for undergraduates to earn their degrees is rising; socioeconomic inequalities are growing; and, in an age of eroding government support and rising tuition, higher education is less affordable for many students and their families. …Technology is not a panacea, and Bowen appreciates how faculty roles and higher education governance itself will need to evolve before technological innovation can lead to positive educational outcomes. But this provocative paper asks us to consider new ways to reach our goals. I look forward to hearing your thoughts on this topic and invite you to comment on our blog.”

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