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eBook Platforms for Academic Libraries

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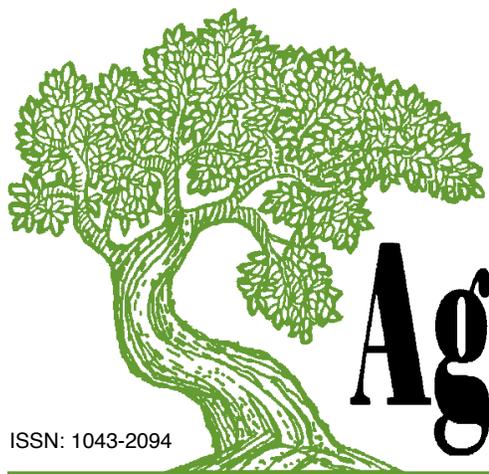
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Against the Grain

“Linking Publishers, Vendors and Librarians”

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eBook Platforms for Academic Librarians

by **Audrey Powers** (Associate Librarian, University of South Florida Libraries) <apowers@usf.edu>

Digital disruption of library resources and services has been taking place for approximately half of a century. As each new electronic library resource or service is developed and implemented, skepticism leads the way. Over time we become accustomed to incorporating these changes into our workflows, and our professional lives settle down for a short while until the next big disruptive technological event or product challenges our way of thinking and conducting business.

As I reflect on this progression of events, it occurred to me that we continually repeat the same process; products are developed, implemented, assessed, and improved. Yet lack of standardization from the beginning of the process inhibits our ability to compare and measure the effectiveness of the technology in question. Only then do we insist on standards that aid us in making effective decisions for our libraries and our patrons. This is a long and arduous process.



This is the process we went through with the development and implementation of databases, electronic journals, and online public access catalogs. Over time standard elements in most article databases have evolved, i.e. basic and advanced search options, faceted classification and navigation, numerous methods to refine a search, etc. Keep in mind, the use of information retrieval systems by librarians in specialized fields began in the early 1980s. It takes time to monitor user behavior, implement revisions, monitor user behavior, and further refine and improve products.

In addition, the development and implementation of usage statistics have taken an inordinately long time to come to fruition. The development and use of eBooks began in 1971 with **Project Gutenberg**, the development and use of databases began in the early 1980s, and **COUNTER** set the standard for reporting use statistics in 2003.

Are there elements we can agree on from the onset of product development as technology rapidly advances? As the ongoing growth of digital content shapes our professional lives and alters our work environments, what can be done to make navigating the digital landscape more manageable for everyone?

As you read through the articles in this issue of *Against the Grain* keep in mind how incorporating eBooks into our collections has disrupted our way of thinking, working, and conducting business. How we can proactively engage developers and sellers of eBook platforms to develop products that will promote effective decision making for our libraries and patrons?

The goal of this issue is to provide a succinct overview of eBook platforms for academic librarians as well as insights into where eBook platforms are headed in the future. Most

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If Rumors Were Horses



Pictured here is **Anthony Watkinson's** latest grandchild, **Samuel**, one day after birth!

Happy New Year, everyone! The newlyweds are settled in Jacksonville and we had a great holiday!

We have a new Dean of Libraries at the **College of Charleston** — **John White** who has his PhD in History and is an archivist. **John** also has a charming wife, **Ann**, a one-year-old son, **Nate**, plus two dogs. Welcome, **John**! **John** is planning a data-driven digital humanities in the library seminar in Charleston in June.

<http://dhinthelibrary.wordpress.com/about/>

And speaking of Conferences, we have a **Charleston Conference old-timer** working part time in technical services, **Julie Arnheim**, once at **Princeton** (and she is also one of our **Charleston Conference mentors**), relocated with her husband to an historic old church which they have renovated. Anyway, **Julie** is full of all kinds of stories and recently she was telling me, after we heard of the death of **Phil Everly**, that she once had a date with him (sort of). You have to ask

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Take a closer look at....

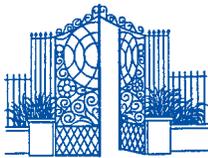
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eBook Platforms for Academic ... *from page 1*

of the authors work in academic libraries, and their job responsibilities include developing, procuring, promoting, and educating users about eBooks. The topics covered include an overview of eBook platforms including technical aspects and business models, lending platforms, aggregator platforms, commercial publisher platforms, and university press platforms. It is our hope that when you read these articles it will add to your knowledge base about the current and future state of eBook platforms in academic libraries. 🌱

Rumors *from page 6*

eye because **Mary Graham**, vice president of South Carolina's **Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce**, was quoted. Is this "the wave of the future?" I certainly hope not. We are looking forward to our interview with **Mary** which is in the works.

<http://www.against-the-grain.com/2014/01/caught-my-eye-1614/>

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Notes from Langlois *from page 8*

south of us, which in this remote part of the state is nothing) to support children's programs, writing workshops, and other activities. These programs require planning, publicity, and engagement with the community. In this I am indeed lucky to have as a counterpart **Tobe Porter**, Director of the **Port Orford Public Library**. **Tobe** is an institution in north Curry County — indeed, she built the **Langlois Public Library** before moving to Port Orford. Her depth of knowledge and prestige in the area has been invaluable to me.

Many programs and fundraising efforts are made possible or supported by the Friends of the **Langlois Public Library**. The library has a loyal and strong Friends group; **Jo Rieber**, the President of the Friends, has been a cheerful and tireless advocate for the library.

Facilities management is another area of concern. Although this stretch of coast is known as Oregon's banana belt — it seldom gets very cold, or for that matter oppressively hot — the combination of marine air, powerful wind, and heavy rain (think of **Ken Kesey's** *Sometimes A Great Notion*) take their toll. Building maintenance is essential. Planning also comes into play here. One of the projects I inherited was that of looking into a possible building expansion. A committee considered the issue and ultimately recommended not pursuing this for at least a year, and the board accepted the recommendation. I'll address the reasons why in a bit.

Training, staff development, and volunteer coordination are all part of the job, and once again vendor experience speaks to some of this — training and staff development are just as vital to vendors. Recruiting enthusiastic volunteers is something new, though, but enjoyable and very necessary. Volunteers are essential for small library operations. The Friends of the Library also funded two summer internships for local students; in addition to working in the library we were able to tour **Ingram's** Roseburg distribution center, and take a field trip to the **University of Oregon's Knight Library**.

Fundraising and grant writing are also vital aspects of managing a library, especially a small one. There are local, regional, state, and national grant makers who have supported projects for our library. One project this past year, funded by the **Curry County Cultural Coalition**, was the digitization of several issues of a late nineteenth-century newspaper published about five miles south of Langlois in the now nearly vanished community of Denmark. The work of digitization was performed by the Oregon Digital Newspaper Program at the **University of Oregon**. I am grateful to **Sheila Rabun**, Project Coordinator, for her help in bringing this project to a smooth and effective conclusion.

Far less familiar is the administrative structure of such libraries. The Langlois Public Library District is, under Oregon law, a special district. Oregon has roughly 900 of them, including library districts, water districts, cemetery districts, ditching and draining districts, fire districts, and so on. We are

advised and aided by an agency of state government, the **Special Districts Association of Oregon**. As the district's chief executive I report to a five-member board of directors, who are publicly elected officials. Strict guidelines and state statutes addressing public meeting law, elections, budget procedures, OSHA compliance, procurement, and much more define our structure and operations.

When I started here, two old friends who have served as public library directors in Alaska for several years told me that one critical key to success is a good working relationship with one's board. I am fortunate to have a board that consists of people genuinely committed to the library's ongoing relevance and excellence, and who endeavor to understand as much as possible about the library world.

The greatest challenge facing this library — indeed so many libraries — is that of sustainability. Property taxes are the primary source of revenue for the district. Although augmented by donations, grants, and fundraising efforts on the part of the Friends, the principal financial foundation of the district is one that is not increasing, while costs continue to rise. The aforementioned library expansion was not pursued because we felt the cost of operating a larger facility would be too great, without offering commensurate benefits.

There are a number of options we can — indeed, must — consider moving forward to ensure our small community can still enjoy the benefits of library services. This will be the topic of my next column. 🌱