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Biz of Acq--PDA, eBooks, Print Books Usage and Expenditures: Knowledge Ecosystem Remix

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Biz of Acq — PDA, eBooks, Print Books Usage and Expenditures: Knowledge Ecosystem Remix

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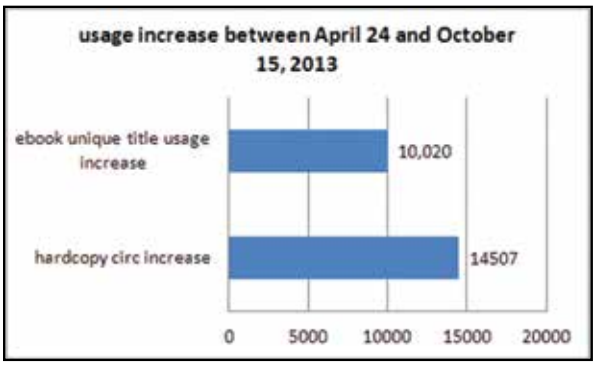
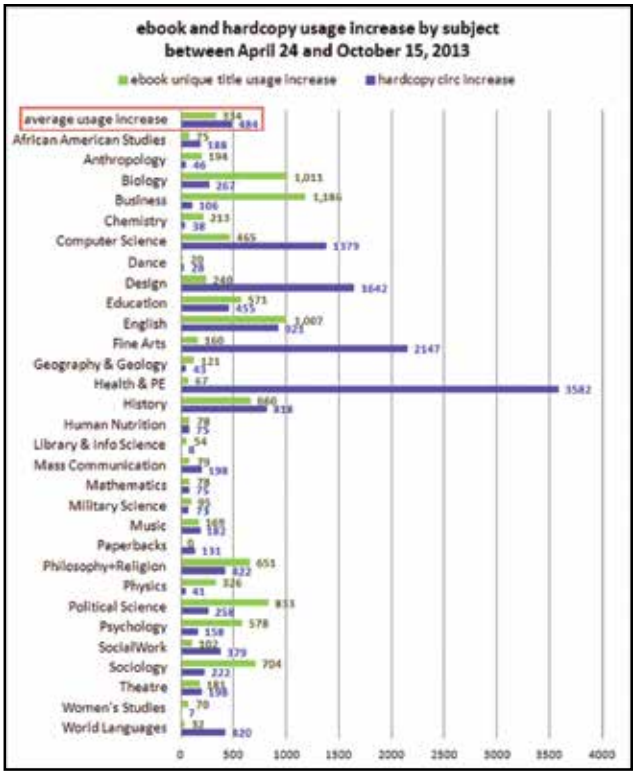
Two years into **Winthrop's** patron-driven acquisitions program and academic eBook subscription, some trends and usage preferences are taking shape. The eBook PDA program began in October 2011, and the academic eBook subscription began in May 2011 — both from the same aggregator. The PDA collection and its usage started from scratch and grew unevenly during the first year, prompting a need to allow the accumulating data time to mature before an examination of usage growth trends by discipline could become meaningful. Moreover, the PDA collection and usage data are still young and need more title to mature to make a granular comparison between PDA and eBook subscription database usage meaningful. Therefore, two years into the scholarly eBooks, the eBook analysis includes PDA and subscription eBook data from the combined aggregator in order to derive a more comparable basis for measuring hardcopy and eBook usage. For analysis purposes, hardcopy circulation and eBook unique title usage are directly comparable. Intensity of use, as measured by pageviews within titles, is a measurement criterion only available for eBook usage and is used to further illuminate eBook use extent within each discipline. This follow-up analysis measures print book and eBook usage trajectories between April 23, 2013 and October 15, 2013 and expenditure patterns for print books and PDA eBooks between July 1, 2011 and October 15, 2013.

Usage Growth: What was Observed?

Despite the novelty and convenience of eBooks, demand for print books remains high. In the six-month comparison period, hardcopy circulation grew by 14,507 compared to eBook unique title usage, which rose by 10,020 over the same period. Average usage growth per discipline was 484 for print books and 334 for eBooks during the comparison period. The hardcopy circulation-to-title usage ratio went up from 2.51 to 2.55 uses per title, while for eBooks the usage-to-titles ratio rose from 0.10 to 0.16.



However, usage growth in print books and eBooks was not uniform across all disciplines in the six-month comparison period. Hardcopy circulation growth by subject area and unique eBook title usage varied considerably from one area to the next. The top four usage growth spurts occurred in print book usage: The highest usage increase of all was hardcopy circulation growth in health & physical education, which rose by 3,582. The next largest usage increase (by 2,147) occurred in fine arts, followed by a rise by 1,642 in design (graphic design, illustration, interior design, visual communication), followed by computer science with hardcopy circulation growth by 1349. The fifth largest growth marks the highest rise in eBook unique title usage: business eBook usage went up by 1,186, followed by biology, whose eBook usage rose by 1,011, in turn followed by English (up by 1,007). Next, political science eBook usage rose by 833, followed by sociology (up by 704) and philosophy and religion, whose eBook rose by 651 unique eBook title uses.



eBook Unique Title Usage and Pageview Increases

All disciplines' eBook usage increased over the six-month comparison period, both for pageviews and unique title usage. The greatest usage growth occurred in the cumulative pageviews for human nutrition, which increased by 3,641% (compared to the area's 23rd-ranking 557% increase in cumulative unique title usage). In second place, fine arts pageviews rose by 2,827%, also ranking second in its unique title usage growth by 1,455%. The third-highest rise in pageviews took place in computer science (up in title use by 845%, placing fifth). Fourth, design pageviews rose by 2,031% and this area ranked first in unique eBook title usage (up by 1,600%). Fifth, pageviews for social work grew by 1,922%, but unique title usage growth by 567% ranked 22nd. The sixth-highest rise in cumulative pageviews was chemistry (up by 1,560%), and chemistry's unique title usage went up by 1,014% (fourth-highest title-usage growth).

The top six growth rates in unique eBook title usages occurred in design (up by 1,600%), fine arts (1,455%), education (1,038%), chemistry (1,014%), computer science (846%), and business (818%). The greatest increases in usage intensity, as measured by pageviews, were shared by some but not all of the same disciplines as those top-ranked in unique title usage growth. Pageviews went up the highest in human nutrition, up by 3,461%. Second in line, pageviews rose by 2,827% in fine arts, followed by computer science (2,548%), design (2,031%), and social work (1,922%). Business, ranking 6th in title usage increase, ranked a middling 16th in pageview increase (up by 992%).

eBook Usage Levels by Discipline, Then and Now

When PDA eBook unique title usage was first measured in December 2012, the largest percentage of eBook usage occurred in psy-

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chology (12.28%) and was followed by business (9.88%), computer science (9.58%), political science (8.68%), sociology (7.19%), and biology (6.89%). Measured on October 15, 2013, the highest unique title usage had accumulated in business at 1,331 unique title uses comprising 11.58% of all unique title uses. Next in line were English (1,179, 10.25%), biology (1,154, 10.04%), political science (954, 8.3%), sociology (828, 7.2%), and history (795, 6.91).

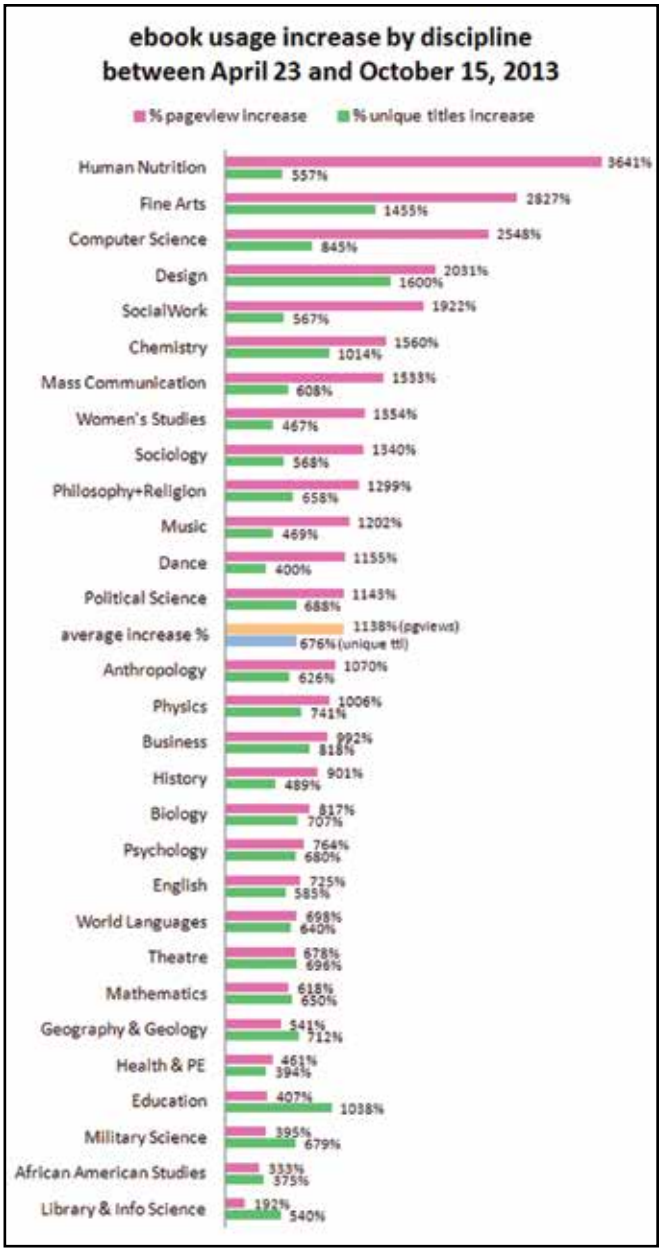
Pageviews, measured in 2013, revealed high intensity of eBook reading among these top six disciplines: Top-ranking biology had amassed 38,757 cumulative pageviews comprising 11.09% of all pageviews. Business came in second with 37,220 (10.65% of all) pageviews, followed by sociology (33,635, 9.62%), English (27,588, 7.89%), political science (24,906, 7.13%), and philosophy & religion (22,637, 6.48%).

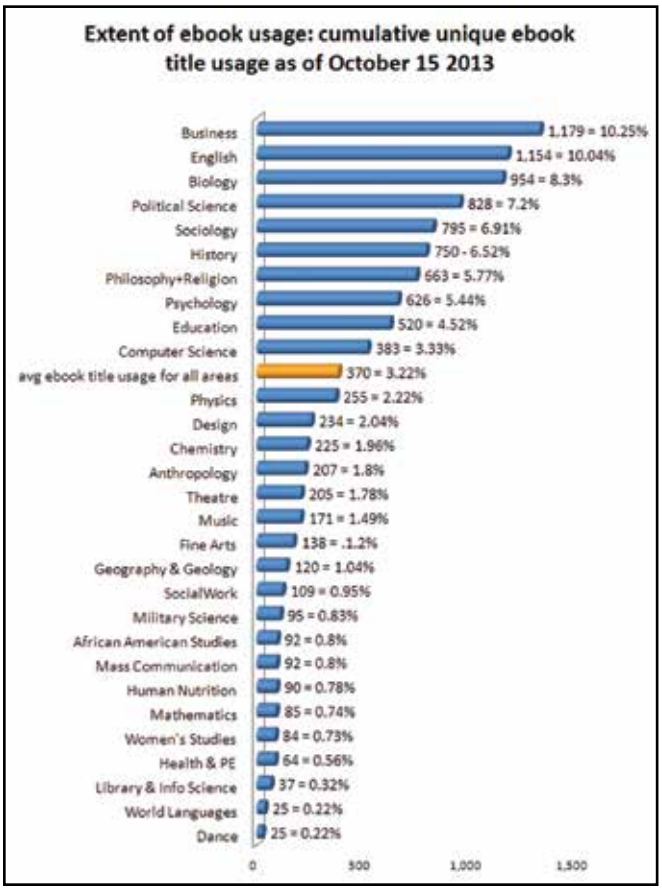
From the first measurement in December 2012 to the most recent in October 2013, eBook use remained most highly concentrated in the four disciplines of biology, business, political science, and sociology. Of disciplines measured in December 2012, psychology dropped from the most active unique title user to eighth place on October 15, 2013 in unique title usage and pageviews. Computer science, in third place in December 2012, slipped to tenth place both in title usage and pageviews. The changing rankings are attributable to the growing size and range of the collection, prompting other disciplines to become more active eBook users relative to the original group of highest-use subject areas.

The following graph shows how each discipline's proportion of eBook unique title use and pageviews changed between April 23 and October 15, 2013. From left to right, each four-section bar shows each discipline's percentage of total unique eBook title usage on April 23, 2013 and again October 15, 2013, followed by each discipline's percentage of total pageviews on April 23, 2013 and again on October 15, 2013.

Expenditure Distribution by Discipline

To ascertain longer-term selection preference patterns between eBook and print books, total expenditures were added up for the period between July 1, 2011 and October 15, 2013. The cumulative expenditures were then broken out by disciplines. The first expenditure analysis shows the percentage of total expenditures taken by each discipline's cumulative expenditure for print books and eBooks respectively. The second expenditure analysis shows the percentage used by each discipline's allocation for print books and eBooks respectively. The analyses include only print books selections and PDA eBook funds; additional funds available to selectors for other formats were not included in the below-described print-to-eBook expenditure comparisons.





Which Disciplines Spent the Most of the Total Print Book Budget?

At 18%, English print expenditures were the highest of all expenditures, followed by education (11.58%), history (9.39%), fine arts (8.86), and political science (7.42%). For those disciplines whose print expenditures comprised high percentages of overall print book expenditures, percentages of total eBook expenditures were low except for political science which, in using 8.38% of the total eBook expenditures, spent a similar percentage (7.42%) of all print book purchases.

Which Disciplines Spent the Most of the Total eBook Budget?

In the time spanning July 1, 2011 to October 15, 2013, biology had by far the highest expenditure in PDA eBooks, commanding nearly 26% of total eBook expenditures (compared to 6.12% of the total print budget). The next

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highest expenditures on eBooks went to psychology at 11.32%, followed by political science (8.38%), sociology (6.55%), and history (5.61%).

To put the comparative eBook and print book expenditures in perspective, print books commanded over 96% of all book expenditures, and slightly less than 4% of all book expenditures went to eBooks. Thus, the amount representing Biology's 26% of total eBook expenditures amounted to 17% of the amount Biology spent on print books.

Juxtaposition of Print to eBook Selection

A given discipline's high percentage of total expenditures in one format was typically not repeated in the other format. Moreover, different disciplines' selection preferences dominated print books and eBook PDA budgets, respectively. For example, English book selections commanded 18% of the print book budget expenditures but only 1.18% of the eBook expenditures. At the same time, biology's book selections commanded nearly 26% of the eBook PDA expenditures and only 6.12% of print book expenditures. These differences are attributable in part to the differences in price per volume in English and biology as well as differences in reading behaviors and outside-of-library access patterns between the two disciplines.

Print Book and eBook Allocations' Percentages Used by Discipline

What percentages of print book and eBook allocations were actually used in the period between July 1, 2011 and October 15, 2013? As the graph shows, the percentages of allocations used varied considerably between disciplines and formats. Moreover, a discipline with high percentage use of its allocation is typically offset by low percentage use of its allocation in the other format.

When PDA eBooks entered into the selection mix, funds were allocated experimentally as a lump sum and not divided up among disciplines while the system matured. Expenditures for both print and eBooks were tracked in tandem to ascertain a sense of format preference for each discipline.

Although current-year budget data included in this multi-year analysis were compiled on October 15, 2013, the current fiscal year runs through June 30, 2014 and thus the current year's book selections are still in the early stages for the operating year. Growing and waning demand for print books in individual disciplines, as indicated by significant over- and under-allocation expenditures, was used as a basis for rebalancing the disciplines' allocation sizes at the beginning of this fiscal year. The PDA eBook plan, begun October 2011, is only into its second full operating year, and data are still being compiled to form a basis for long-term decision support. This fiscal year marks the first year in which eBook funds were allocated to individual disciplines, based the prior year's eBook usage and expenditure percentages of total usage. Next year's eBook allocations will be readjusted based on this year's expenditure data.

What Remains Unanswered?

eBook usage analysis will need another full operating year (perhaps two) to allow the data to mature into definitive trends and to form a meaningful basis for determining each discipline's balance between print book and eBook needs. Future more granular analysis with separate focus on PDA discovery eBooks, the PDA subset graduated into perpetual-ownership eBook purchases, and academic eBook subscription titles will be conducted to determine which of these eBook subsets are used most heavily and by which disciplines. Expenditure trajectories will also be examined. Moreover, formal user community surveys and tracking of hybrid and online course activity will factor strongly in discipline-specific long-range needs assessment.

Library Implications

The relationships between hardcopy circulation and eBook usage show that print and electronic books are not interchangeable for all disciplines. In fact, overall hardcopy circulation growth exceeded eBook usage growth by nearly 50%; the highest discipline-specific usage growth was a rise in hardcopy circulation by 3,582% in health & physical education, three times the size of the highest eBook title usage increase (Business, up by 1,186%). Other high growth in hardcopy circulation for fine arts, design, and computer science occurred in areas where the printed book is used alongside hands-on work where using eBooks on computer screens and portable devices would be impractical. The highest eBook usage growth

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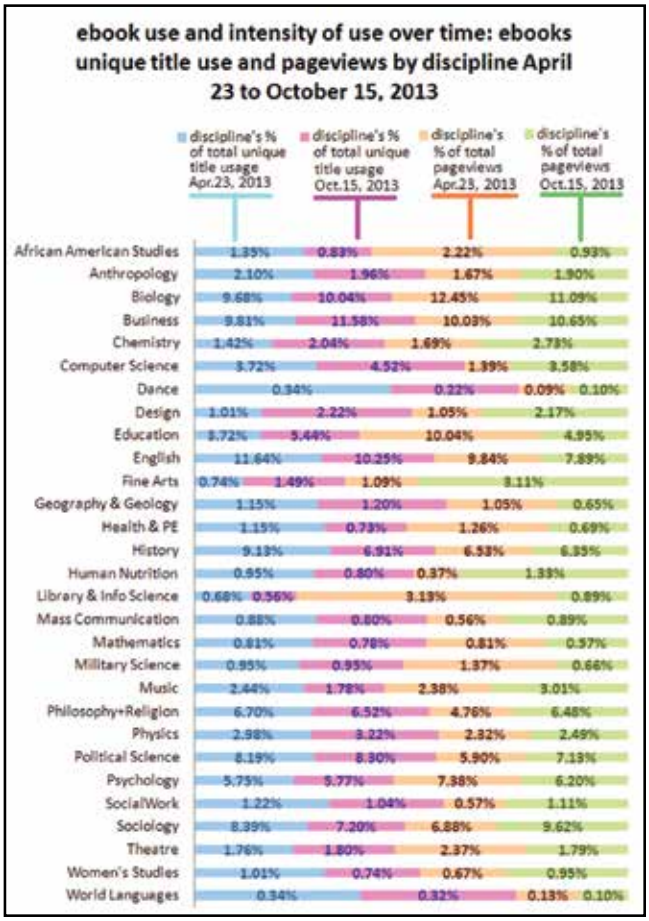

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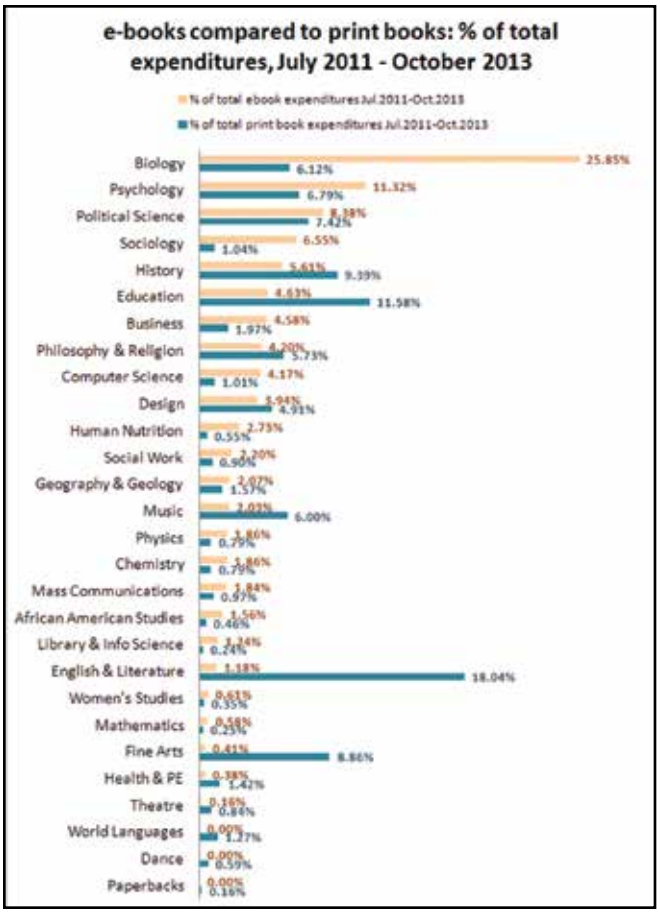
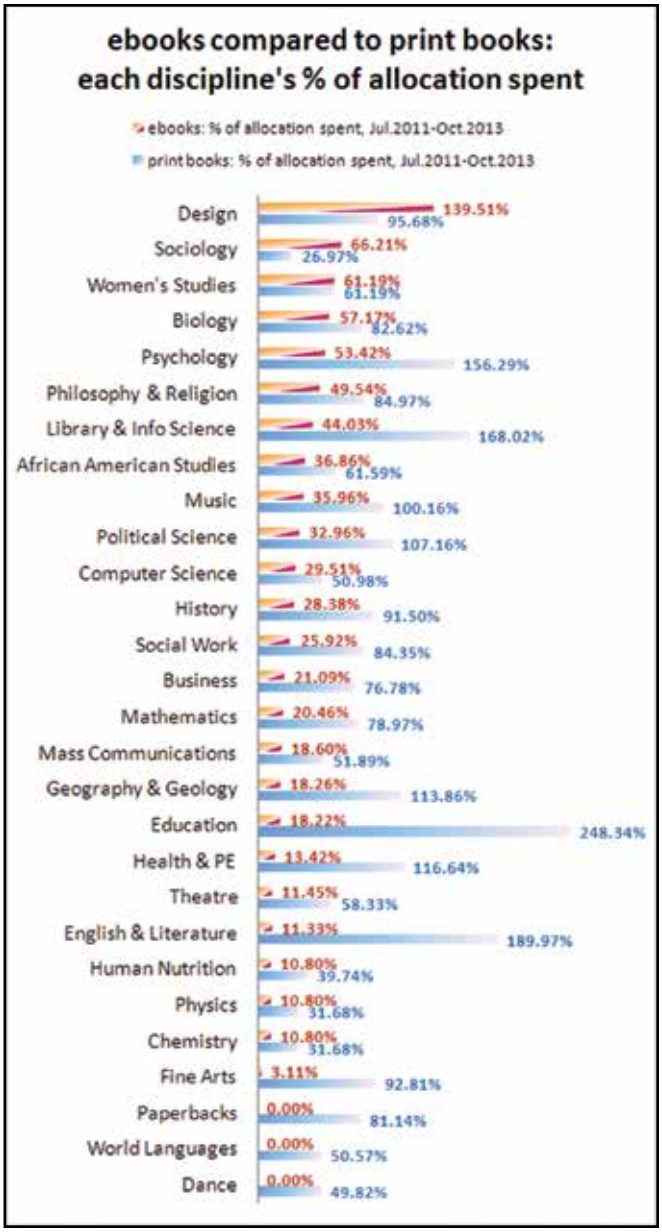
occurring in business, biology, English, political science, sociology, and history was found in disciplines with hybrid and online courses, graduate programs, students who work in addition to study and need off-campus access, and faculty members who value off-site electronic access for research. Informal user feedback is not unanimous: some professors refuse eBooks under all circumstances, while others value the versatility of off-site access; many students express preference for print books despite acknowledging the convenience of eBooks. First and foremost then is the library's role as knowledge ecosystem in support of student learning.





Little Red Herrings — We Have Met the Enemy, And He Is Us

by **Mark Y. Herring** (Dean of Library Services, Dacus Library, Winthrop University) <herringm@winthrop.edu>

Sometimes, we librarians are our own worst enemies. That's not altogether unusual in any profession, but we librarians often make things harder than they need to be. We are in difficult times as a profession. Had it not been for the **Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program**, we might already be dead, a fact that I know gives many colleagues heartburn as the name "Bush" or the idea of Republicans helping sits unwell on most librarians' stomachs. And therein hangs the tale of shooting ourselves, first in the foot, and then in the head. But I'll come back to this particular point later.

First, we are sometimes our own worst enemies on our campuses. We are at times unyielding about our budgets. It goes without saying that we do not get enough money — who does on a university campus? — but we librarians often seem to be especially prickly about it. Sometimes, we think we're targeted for lower funding on purpose. Sometimes, we think everyone else is getting what they asked for, but we are not. Sometimes, we even think there is some sort of conspiracy of funding to starve the library of money. Seriously?

Second, we are, at times, unyielding about staff positions. Now, there are never enough positions in any area. I mean, how many businesses say "We've got plenty of staff"? But sometimes, we librarians think that there are jobs only librarians can do, and jobs only paraprofessionals can or should do, and never the twain shall meet, ever. But it really isn't that way any more (read **Gillian Gremmels'** "Staffing in College and University Libraries" (*Reference Services Review*, Vol. 41 (2) 2013), but do not do it before bedtime or you'll never get to sleep). We think we have to do everything the same way we've always done it, a recipe for obsolescence for any profession. We make stark divisions between technical services and public services staff, and what each is "allowed" to do. We tend, too, to make especially sharp divisions between what intelligent student workers can do regardless of their ability to do them.

Finally — and the point I said I'd get back to — we shoot ourselves in the foot politically. I don't mean that librarians shouldn't have political opinions. Lord knows, I have them. I mean that as a profession we cannot afford to favor one political side against another publicly. And yet, we do that at just about

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