February 2017

If Rumors Were Horses

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I can still remember the time that, as a Graduate Research Assistant in the Department of History at the University of Chicago, the professor I was working with asked me to search Historical Abstracts on CD-ROM. It was 1993, and while I had been using print indexes for years, I had never searched a CD-ROM index before. I had to ask a librarian for help, and I got a rather perfunctory, “Look, you just type the search term in this box and use these limiters to refine your search. Then you hit enter. Just ask me if you need more help.” And with that he left me floundering around for a while before I became frustrated and went back to the print version of the index.

It’s hard to imagine now that searching such a simple electronic index could be so unfamiliar and befuddling! It’s also hard to imagine today seeing piles of bound periodicals stacked around the photocopiers, students and faculty copying articles and checking to be sure that they copied the whole image, student workers removing cart after cart of these bound volumes to a massive sorting area where they worked in shifts to shelf them...

We are, in so many ways, in a different age. The World Wide Web and electronic resources have transformed the work of research and learning in ways that render 1993 quite distant. And nothing tells us more about the changes in libraries than does the Big Deal, a publisher’s strategy for delivering packages of electronic journal content to libraries that would not have been possible without both the WWW and ejournals.

The purpose of this special issue of Against the Grain is to present different perspectives on the Big Deal in this digital age. Our purpose is neither to condemn nor to celebrate the Big Deal, but rather to understand its impact on various libraries and publishers since it emerged in the late 1990s.

Elisabeth Leonard begins our issue with “The Big Deal and SAGE,” discussing how SAGE adapted its distribution and publication strategies in the early 2000s in response to changes in the scholarly communication market, driven by the emergence of the powerful online STEM publication field and the Big Deal. Leonard emphasizes that SAGE has always viewed the Big Deal as one option among many to distribute content and that SAGE is no more wedded to the Big Deal than they are to other models.

Sven Fund, on the other hand, brings the perspective of an independent publisher to the conversation in “Choosing Independence or Feeding the Beast? The Big Deal and Small or Society Publishers.” Fund suggests that continued on page 10
Y'all have probably already heard that I am learning how to move out of a house I have been in for 40 years! So much “stuff” to find a home for! I am not a patient person and so I am impatient with the speed of our progress. Oh well.

Meanwhile, here is another great issue of Against the Grain! This one is guest edited on a topic that is near and dear to our hearts — The Big Deal! Kudos to the marvelous Matthew Ismail who has persevered through serendipity. We have several and about Steve Sowards, Matthew Ismail, and Elisabeth Leonard — on a topic that is near and dear to our hearts Against the Grain. Oh well.

I have been in for 40 years! So much 'all have probably already heard that I know how many steps they have to navigate moving my piano (it's big!) and they want to do their usual outstanding questions and answers! Bob Holley talks about changing Amazon fees, and Lisa Lemibinen talks about research data. Ramune’s great work with reporters for the 2016 Charleston Conference leaves us with many reports on sessions that we were not able to attend. And there is more and more.

I was just contacted by the people who are moving my piano (it’s big!) and they want to know how many steps they have to navigate up and down. Plus the dishwasher needs to be unhooked! Don’t move if you can avoid it!

But don’t despair, Spring is coming soon!

Love, Yr. Ed. ♡

Letters to the Editor

Send letters to kstrauch@comcast.net, phone or fax 843-723-3536, or snail mail: Against the Grain, Post Office Box 799, Sullivan’s Island, SC 29482. You can also send a letter to the editor from the ATG Homepage at http://www.against-the-grain.com.

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Thank you for your kind words! Information on creating a username and password for the ATG NewsChannel website will be emailed to all print subscribers. If you don’t receive this email, please contact Leah Hinds at leah@charlestonlibraryconference.com to request access. — Yr. Ed. ♡

Rumors

from page 1

lishing for Media Source, Inc., where he was responsible for strategic planning and day-to-day operations of such prestigious publications as Library Journal, School Library Journal, and The Horn Book.

Related, Credo recently launched Credo Education. The new subsidiary partners with educational institutions to prepare students for continuous learning and success. The awesome Mike Sweet, Credo’s CEO for the past eight years says that the focus on information literacy and critical thinking led them to this opportunity. Leading the new division is Michael Serafino, who has been hired as Vice President of Educational Solutions. I remember back when Credo was founded in the U.K. under the name of Xrefer and the delightful Daryl Rayner wrote her Rumours from Paddington for ATG! https://www.exacteditions.com/ www.corp.credoeeducation.com www.credoeeducation.com

The focused Heather Joseph (Executive Director SPARC) writes that they just received some very good news from the Gates Foundation. They’ve come to a nice arrangement with the AAAS to offer an open access option for the journal Science that is in full compliance with the Gates Foundation’s open access policy! http://www.sciencemag.org/about/aaas-and-gates-foundation-partnership-announcement
https://medium.com/@LeighMSpeaks/taking-steps-to-expand-access-to-high-quality-scientific-publishing-6db7a66fe9be#.k6e4z046v

Got an email from the bam-zowie Erin Gallagher who has left Rollins and the Florida sunshine for the snow in Portland.

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the conversation around the Big Deal has revolved mostly around cost efficiencies for libraries and the strategies of large publishers, but “What has been largely overlooked is the impact the Big Deal has on both the portfolio of publishers offering it as well as on partners that work with these publishers.” Fund hopes that small publishers and librarians will both see the value in not being rolled up into Big Deals, offering more freedom and more variety in offerings as a result.

Susann devries brings an economic perspective to bear on the Big Deal in “The Economics of the Big Deal: The Bulls, the Bears and the Farm.” Perhaps the central focus of devries’ article is on an accounting principle called the Triple Bottom Line, “an accounting basis that has gained significant attention in the business sector. Whereas the traditional, single bottom line only focused on profit, the TBL approach differs from profit-based or financial outlook to include social and ecological measures for assessment.” devries suggests that libraries need to think beyond the traditional financial bottom line — what’s the cheapest option? — and begin to “take into account our social obligation to our patrons’ research needs, and we must develop a long-term sustainable approach to access when analyzing the pros and cons of purchasing any Big Deal. Multiple dimensions and perspectives have to be taken into account.”

Jonathon Nabe’s “After the Big Deals Are Done” brings the perspective of a librarian at a research university who has overseen a divestment from Big Deal packages because his institution no longer found them sustainable. When Nabe published “Leaving the Big Deal: Consequences and Next Steps” in 2012, it was quite astonishing to think of any research library not subscribing to Big Deal packages. Nabe states in 2017, however, that “All evidence indicates that subscriptions to entire publisher portfolios are not essential to the functioning of a modern research university.”

Doug Way’s “Doubling Down on the Big Deal in Wisconsin” describes the varied career of the Big Deal at a library that was initially quite opposed to them. Having to present the wide-ranging pros and cons of the Big Deal to a skeptical audience was important to Way, as it is for the Triple Bottom Line championed by devries, because he was able to subscribe to some Big Deals precisely because he was able to justify the financial bottom line as a compelling reason.

Steve Sowards, similarly, presents the relationship of his institution to Big Deals in “The Big Deal at Michigan State University.” Sowards presents the many compelling reasons for maintaining their Big Deals, both financial and based on their compelling support for research.

Finally, in our concluding article, “Managing the Big Deal,” Monica Moore presents a perspective not often heard in these discussions: that of an Electronic Resources Librarian who has to implement and maintain these Big Deal packages and the ramifications of this maintenance for the library and its staff. “Any time libraries buy or lease something in bulk, it requires translation into the infrastructure that we use to manage our library collection. This includes our integrated library system (ILS) and our discovery systems, and any type of knowledge base that includes the holdings information for the journals in a deal. There is a significant amount of staff time and resources involved with these efforts, not only for the initial acquisition, but for the ongoing management of this bundled content.”

What we can see from these varied and interesting perspectives is that the Big Deal is neither going to remain as ubiquitous as it was nor is it necessarily going away. The Triple Bottom Line approach, a version of which is often present in libraries' decision-making whether they call it that or not, will double down encourage libraries both to continue their Big Deals, as at MSU and Wisconsin, or to discontinue them, as I recently did for most of them at Central Michigan University.

This is an important discussion and I hope these articles enlighten readers to the various perspectives on the Big Deal and the direction of conversations at various publishers and libraries.
impact. Certainly the meaning and value of a student or scholar’s interaction with a daily entry on Matt’s site cannot be measured so simply as number of page view. What follows is an interview with Matt discussing Black Quotidian and how Matt thinks about the impact of his work.

What was the impetus behind creating Black Quotidian? Were you primarily driven to serve undergraduate learners or scholars?

My goal with Black Quotidian is to bring African American history and black newspapers to new audiences in a novel format. So for the audience it includes scholars and students, but also people outside of the academy who might see one of my tweets and want to learn more about these topics. When we teach history we make difficult choices about what to include and exclude. Black Quotidian is my small act of rebellion against the pressure to fit African American history into a single month or a fifteen-week semester.

How are you monitoring usage on the site? What are your key measures of usage?

I’m monitoring visits to the website using basic Google Analytics on visitors, page views, and session duration. I circulate the new posts primarily via Twitter, so I also keep track of the tweet activity. The site has received over 25,000 page views in the first eight months. This isn’t a lot for a commercial site, but it is way more than my academic journal articles have received.

Impact, that is touching and changing lives, is difficult to measure in online platforms. How do you “measure” the impact of Black Quotidian?

This tends to be more anecdotal. People will message me on twitter, send me emails, or stop me at conferences to say that they like the project. I’ve also presented on this project to different audiences (to scholars interested in digital humanities, to high school teachers, to ProQuest’s marketing and programming staff) and these small group interactions have helped me see what aspects of the project really resonate. I always ask how many people have heard of Claudette Colvin (she was a fifteen-year-old who refused to give up her seat nine months before Rosa Parks, but she did not become a symbolic figure of the Civil Rights movement), and usually only a few people raise their hands. Sharing these histories is what makes me excited about the project.

As a scholar and classroom teacher, how do you assess the impact of your work beyond the traditional measures of, say, citations of your scholarly work?

Researching and writing short daily posts has reinvigorated my relationship to scholarship. I continue to be surprised by the amazing stories that live in the archives of Black newspapers, and it is fun to be able to share several hundred of these stories with web audiences. I have come to view scholarly communication, via Twitter and elsewhere, as an everyday process rather than something that happens every few months at conference or every few years in articles and books. It is nice to be able to briefly discuss new research finds without having to write 8,000 or 80,000 words on every topic. The project is changing how I think about, write about, and teach African American history. From this perspective, Black Quotidian and similar digital projects count by fostering or renewing a sense of scholarly curiosity and experimentation.

What is your selection process for inclusion of articles in Black Quotidian?

On most days I’ll pick a specific newspaper and date (e.g., the Cleveland Call and Post on October 15, 1946) and then look for an article that I think is interesting. In some cases, I’ll look for a specific event that was historically important (e.g., the March on Washington). While some of these posts features well-known figures like Carter G. Woodson, Rosa Parks, and Shirley Chisholm, I am also excited to learn and share the stories of people and events not commonly featured in textbooks, documentaries, or Black History Month celebrations.

Which selections have generated the most views? And the most “impact” in your view?

The post from April 4, 1968, which featured headlines and articles from the black press after Martin Luther King’s assassination, generated the most page views. My favorite post was from March 31, 1934 about a women’s basketball team sponsored by the Philadelphia Tribune.

What is next for you?

I have two upcoming projects that are connected to Black Quotidian in different ways. After I complete a year of daily posts for Black Quotidian (in January 2017), in the project’s second phase I will write analytical essays drawing on black newspapers and other multimedia sources, and develop flexible thematic pathways to allow readers to explore this research in different ways. My next book project is on African Americans in World War II and, while this will be a traditional print book, it will draw heavily on black newspapers.

Rumors from page 10

Scopus, ScienceDirect, SciVal and Pure, leading journal and society partner sites and CiteScore metrics. Tom Gilson and I had an intriguing phone conversation with the engaging and filled-with-enthusiasm Andrea Michalek, Managing Director of Plum Analytics the other day. Watch for our interview in the next issue of ATG (April)!. Plus we are planning to do a Podcast with Andrea soon!

Speaking of Podcasts, have y’all clicked on the link on the ATG NewsChannel? We have been overwhelmed with the success of our podcasts! We just began them two weeks ago and we have had well over 900 visits! Who would have thought? Thanks to the team of the quick study and implementer Don Lewis, the incomparable Leah Hinds, and there is nothin-he-can’t-do Tom Gilson! New Podcasts are being added every week so why not use a bookmark! http://www.atgtheppodcast.com/

Jim Mullins, dean of libraries and the Esther Ellis Norton Professor, has announced that he will retire from Purdue on Dec. 31. “Since joining Purdue in 2004, Jim has instituted innovative changes to improve and promote access to research and information for faculty, staff, students and visitors to Purdue,” says Deba Dutta, provost and executive vice president for academic affairs and diversity. “Under Jim’s leadership, Purdue Libraries has emerged as an international leader in information literacy — including the first endowed professorship — scholarly communication, data management, and archives and special collections. He has helped Purdue conceptualize and create a new form of library and learning spaces, a vision that will be fully realized with the opening this fall of the Wilmeth Active Learning Center.” In 2015, Purdue Libraries received the Excellence in University Library Award of the Association of College and Research Libraries, the highest distinction among academic libraries in the U.S.. In 2016, Mullins received the prestigious Hugh A. Atkinson Award by the American Library Association in recognition of his outstanding leadership and his many contributions to research libraries. Mullins’ contributions extend far beyond Purdue. He has served in leadership roles in countless library organizations and has an impressive publication and presentation agenda. Jim Mullins and Charles Watkinson developed Purdue University Press’ the Charleston Insights in Library, Archival, and Information Sciences Series. Plans to launch a search for identifying the next leader for Purdue Libraries will be announced in the coming weeks.


http://www.thepress.purdue.edu/series/charleston-insights-library-archival-and-information-sciences

Speaking of retirements, had a delightful luncheon this weekend with the glamorous (Charlotte Initiative) October Ivins and (don’t you love his accent?) Will Wakeling who retired from Northeastern on December 3.

Sure you saw the article in Science about the disappearance of Jeffrey Beall’s list of predatory publishers — “Mystery as controversial list of predatory publishers disappears,” continued on page 50

<http://www.against-the-grain.com>


The announcement of the Nobel Laureates in all the various disciplines is one of my personal anticipations each autumn. When it was announced that Bob Dylan had been awarded the 2016 Nobel Prize in Literature “for having created new poetic expressions within the great American song tradition,” I realized that a trip to the library was not going to be on my agenda. Instead I would find myself delving into a collection of more than 600 song lyrics online, for Bob Dylan is the first musician to win the prize in the 115 years of Nobel history.

I was young when Dylan came onto the music scene, but the lyrics to “The Times They Are a-Changin,” “Blowin’ in the Wind,” and “Like a Rolling Stone” are part of my mental soundtrack and most likely yours, too. But lyrics as literature, this is a twist. And then I remembered a high school summer class in English where the teacher distributed lyrics to several popular songs and we as a class were asked to read them, interpret them and understand them, much like a group of poems, short stories, or excerpts from literature. I was enchanted with that teacher who took such an edgy approach to her English curriculum.

Born Robert Allen Zimmerman in 1941 in Duluth, Minnesota, Dylan legally changed his name to Robert Dylan in 1962. He gave an explanation for his name changing during a 2004 interview with CBS: “You’re born, you know, the wrong names, wrong parents. I mean, that happens. You call yourself what you want to call yourself. This is the land of the free.”

Dylan dropped out of school to pursue his musical aspirations. Like many aspiring musicians, he traveled to New York City. While there he visited Woody Guthrie, who heavily influenced his early music career and he decided he would become Guthrie’s disciple. Dylan also explored the musical genres of American folk, blues, rock, gospel and jazz as well as folk music from other ethnic origins to sculpt his songs, all the while embracing various literary influences to craft the lyrics to deliver the messages. It has worked for generations of Dylan followers.

Dylan’s songs and lyrics rose in popularity during a time of social unrest and anti-war sentiment in America. They resonated with the youth of these times and quickly became part of the popular vernacular. We easily break into “The answer is blowin’ in the wind” or “How does it feel. To be without a home. Like a rolling stone?” or “The night they lifted her veil.

The palace of mirrors
Where dog soldiers are reflected
The endless road and the wailing of chimes
The empty rooms where her memory is protected
Where the angels’ voices whisper to the souls of previous times.

She wakes him up
Forty-eight hours later the sun is breaking
Near broken chains, mountain laurel and rolling rocks
She’s begging to know what measures he now will be taking
He’s pulling her down and she’s clutching on to his long golden locks.

Gentlemen, he said I don’t need your organization, I’ve shined your shoes
She’s torn between Jupiter and Apollo
They shaved her head
The captain is down but still believing that his love will be repaid.

Whose ebony face is beyond communication
Sending his thoughts to a beloved maid
Fortune calls
Spreading their wings ‘neath falling leaves.

The cold-blooded moon
The captain waits above the celebration
Whose ebeny face is beyond communication
The captain is down but still believing that his love will be repaid.

They shaved her head
She was torn between Jupiter and Apollo
A messenger arrived with a black nightingale
I seen her on the stairs and I couldn’t help but follow
Follow her down past the fountain where they lifted her veil.

I stumbled to my feet
I rode past destruction in the ditches
With the stitches still mending beneath a heart-shaped tattoo
Renegade priests and treacherous young witches
Were handing out the flowers that I’d given to you.

The palace of mirrors
Where dog soldiers are reflected
The endless road and the wailing of chimes
The empty rooms where her memory is protected
Where the angels’ voices whisper to the souls of previous times.

Peace will come
With tranquility and splendor on the wheels of fire
But will bring us no reward when her false idols fall
And cruel death surrenders with its pale ghost retreating
Between the King and the Queen of Swords.

Sixteen years
Sixteen banners united over the field
Where the good shepherd grieves
Desperate men, desperate women divided
Spreading their wings ’neath falling leaves.

Fortune calls
I stepped forth from the shadows to the marketplace
Merchants and thieves, hungry for power, my last deal gone down
She’s smelling sweet like the meadows where she was born
On midsummer’s eve near the tower.

Jisc, the digital solutions provider for UK education and research, has announced that OCLC, has been awarded the contract to develop a new National Bibliographic Knowledgebase (NBK). The NBK, originally proposed in Jisc’s National Monograph Strategy, will support the learning and research needs of the UK higher education community. The vision is to extend the capabilities of the current Copac service, by investing in technology that can continue on page 57

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by Dalmeet Singh Chawla (Jan. 17, 2017)

“The blog—started in 2010 by librarian Jeffrey Beall of the University of Colorado in Denver (CU Denver) — now states: “This service is no longer available.” You may remember that Beall brought up the predatory publisher issue in The Charleston Advisor. http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2017/01/mystery-controversial-list-predatory-publishers-disappears

Just heard that Lulu Publishing is extending their help and services to the authors who were left behind by the Tate Publishing closure. lulu.com

Good news from John Dove. According to his doctors, he is entirely on the mend. John says his challenge for the next few weeks is to avoid lifting 5 pounds. Sounds doable, John!
Questions & Answers
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performance. Depending on the movie, it is possible that there would be no royalty fee for the performance. Also, there are public domain motion pictures for which no permission is required. The school should contact a motion picture licensing agency to inquire about a license to perform the movie.

QUESTION: A university librarian is puzzled about whether the U.S. Copyright Office should become an independent agency or should remain a part of the Library of Congress.

ANSWER: Not surprisingly, most librarians would like to see the Copyright Office remain a part of the Library of Congress. But other members of the copyright community disagree. The first U.S. Copyright Act was enacted in 1790, and for many years following the enactment, copyright registrations were approved by clerks of federal district courts upon the filing of a claim by a copyright owner. The Library of Congress was established in 1800. The copyright system was not moved into the Library until 1846 to relieve the burden on the court systems and to give LC access to the required deposits of copyrighted works for its collections. For years, a large part of the library’s collection was obtained through the copyright registration system. Copyright was moved to the U.S. Patent Office from 1859-70. The Copyright Act of 1870 reestablished the copyright registration system and deposits of two copies of published works in the Library of Congress. (See Jacob Harper, The United States Copyright Office: Nostalgia for the Past, Obstacle for the Future, 4, AM. UNIV. INT’L L.J. 30 (2013) for a history of the Copyright Office.)

In the mid-1990s there was a proposal to move the Copyright Office to the Department of Commerce which also houses the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office so that all federal intellectual property issues would be governed by one agency. There were many objections to this proposal, primarily that copyright would be completely overshadowed by patent and trademark, and that such a move would change the focus of copyright to purely an economic one.

At the request of Congress, Register Maria Pallante wrote a letter proposing the Copyright Office become an independent agency, and there appears to be a good deal of support for this in the greater copyright community. Library associations have opposed the move from the Library of Congress, and there have been many blog posts in support of the status quo. (For example, see http://blogs.library.duke.edu/scholcomm/2016/12/14/where-should-the-copyright-office-live/). Certainly, there are pros and cons to the proposal. Most librarians understand the benefits of remaining with the Library of Congress. Nevertheless, copyright industries, as well as the Register’s letter, point to some of the disadvantages remaining a part of LC. One of the major problems has been LC’s inability to provide necessary information technology upgrades to support a modern copyright registration system. The Register competes with all other LC departments for technology upgrades despite its constitutionally mandated responsibility for copyright registration. The Office has often lacked necessary independence to act. Further, libraries and library associations often take positions on copyright matters, the very issues the Office must administer. Some argue that this creates a conflict of interest.

In December, the House Judiciary Committee introduced a policy proposal covering a number of copyright issues and Copyright Office matters. The recommendation is for an independent Copyright Office. It also includes a technology modernization plan for the Office, increasing the autonomy of the Office from LC, additional control over its own budget and technology and various other reforms. Public comment on the proposal closes January 31, 2017.

QUESTION: A photographer asks what has happened in the case against Getty Images filed by photographer Carol Highsmith.

ANSWER: What began as a very explosive $1 billion case has pretty much fizzled. Carol Highsmith made thousands of her images available to the public through donation to the Library of Congress. Highsmith learned that Getty had more than 18,000 of her images on its website and was selling her photographs and charging people for the use of those images when she received a letter from Getty demanding that she pay $120 for using her own images on her website. She charged that Getty was holding itself out as the copyright owner of the photographs and falsely applied watermarks to her images. She sued for copyright misuse and for false removal of copyright information. Further, she said that she never relinquished ownership in the copyrights when she transferred the images to LC.

Getty countered that Highsmith placed her works into the public domain and therefore had no rights to assert. She replied that she merely intended to create a Creative Commons type of license with access through the Library of Congress. Getty said that it made a mistake in requesting payment from Highsmith which it rectified upon notification. In October 2016, the federal district court agreed with Getty, and dismissed her federal copyright claims accepting Getty’s arguments that public domain

Questions & Answers

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Rumors
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ingest diverse library data at higher speed and greater volume. The new service will enable libraries to manage their ingest in a better way, with reduced costs and increased efficiencies. The new service is based on the S3 protocol and is available as a cloud-based solution.

Tim Whisenant has just been appointed regional vice president for the Western U.S. at WT Cox Information Services. He brings 27 years of expertise to the library community and he began his career as a reference and instruction librarian. Whisenant will manage the Western U.S. territory in all library markets including academic, public, and special libraries with a concentration on account management, integrated solutions, and customer service. WT Cox Information Services is located at 201 Village Road, Shallotte, NC.

http://www.wtcx.com

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materials needed in understanding open science and RDM. Data librarians and other faculty liaison librarians need to refocus their core competencies such as storage, archiving, metadata, and data description skills in relation to data. Data librarians must keep their acquired skills and competencies up-to-date and follow RDM-related trends in librarianship as the latter also require new skills, including project management, public relations, and international collaboration. Likewise, library services must also be built on these new needs and competencies, constituting a switch from collection-based services to RDM-based services.

For infrastructure set-up and support, libraries could join the COAR (Confederation of Open Access Repositories) network for open access repositories. When setting up a data repository, a library should consider if necessary infrastructure already exists within the university or country (central) or if there is any international infrastructure that could meet the needs of their researchers (OpenAIRE). There is no worse thing than setting up another repository that nobody will ever use or which is not linked to an international search engine. This will not help any library’s reputation.

The key word in any RDM services set-up is collaboration. Experience from various university libraries also demonstrates that RDM services are not something one unit within an institution can implement alone; it takes a contribution on a wider scale from the entire institution. Even further, the collaboration should not be limited to one institution, not even one country. Since most academic libraries are facing same RDM service set-up challenges, it is important to look for guidance and support from outside. There is no point to re-invent the wheel!

Libraries are facing major changes in the 21st century. The role, the focus, and the mission of libraries are changing. More than ever, universities and researchers need libraries and their expertise. Each individual library must make an important decision in terms of either willingly making the effort to administer all of the required changes, or remaining idle in waiting for a more appropriate moment in time. Regrettably, research needs are changing very quickly and waiting may no longer constitute a valid option. For once, it may become necessary for libraries to take a risk and adopt a quick solution instead of following a more traditional and time-consuming process of thought.


References


Congratulations to Edward Elgar Publishing which has been awarded the Fox Williams Independent Publisher of the Year Award 2017 at this year’s Independent Publishing Guild (IPG) Awards. As a “resolutely forward-looking business,” expanding into law publishing and building digital platform Elgaronline, the judges praised EEP for “punching way above its weight despite competition from far larger operators.” “Edward Elgar produced an outstanding performance in a difficult market in 2016,” the judges said. “It is a very well run and profitable company with excellent... continued on page 86
When I was ten years old, I wanted to read Mickey Mantle’s autobiography: The Mickey Mantle Story, by Mickey Mantle as told to Ben Epstein, with a Foreword by Casey Stengel (1953). I knew I would someday play center field for the Yankees and wanted to study the Mick’s secrets. (I’m still available if they need me.) I had the run of the Post Library at White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico after my parents explained to the librarians that it was ok for me to check out any adult books I wanted. (Thank you, Miss Tolson, for being so accommodating.)

Every week for two years on my library prowl, I went by the Biography shelves and looked under the Ms, ever hopeful, always disappointed. It never dawned on me that the book had gone missing and would never appear.

That was my first experience of the frustrations of browsing shelves. I’ve spent a good part of my life since with the joys and the frustrations of browsing and now, like many, find myself just spending less time, joyful or frustrated. How can we think about this familiar, challenged cultural practice?

Yes, serendipity happens when you browse. You find things you didn’t know exist. But other stuff happens too. You can plunge into an unfamiliar subject and get a snapshot of what other stuff happens too. You can plunge into an unfamiliar subject and get a snapshot of what other stuff happens too. You can plunge into an unfamiliar subject and get a snapshot of what other stuff happens too. You can plunge into an unfamiliar subject and get a snapshot of what other stuff happens too.

So how long does this model sustain itself? What does it depend on?

First, it requires us to keep our main collections together on publicly available shelves. That’s problematic both for the huge increase in what we have on our shelves (more than doubled in the last thirty years) and for the increasing number of items that don’t show up in print form — either unavailable in that form or chosen for e-purchase by libraries deliberately. Remember that many of our greatest libraries are already shelving appreciable portions of their collections off-site and thus unbrowserable. (The less popular materials usually? Well, but mightn’t the less popular be just the ones that most benefit from random scrutiny by the curious?)

Second, it requires us to send into the stacks on a daily basis curious and fearless students and faculty with time to spend there and the habit of shelf-browsing built up over years. How is the supply of that population doing? Does this generation of students have the habit, the curiosity, the fearlessness that my generation did long ago? There was nothing so magical to me as the stacks of my first great research library, when every shelf was heavily laden with material I couldn’t imagine finding in any other way. The eyes of your young, on the other hand, are jaded by knowing both too little and too much.

Third, it requires us to pass over lightly the unavoidable fact that many, many, many people who might reasonably benefit from a good shelf browse will never have that opportunity by virtue of their physical location. As an adolescent, I was one of those, in a town where even if I had looked very hard I could not have found books printed in the Greek alphabet or Latin books that weren’t either church books or school books. Now I’m a classics professor — I was heavy laden with a new form of scholarly communication, even if I had looked very hard I could not have found books printed in the Greek alphabet or Latin books that weren’t either church books or school books.

What can’t you do? If you bear in mind that well over half of our library acquisition budgets will be spent on journals, not monographs, you won’t see any of that other material. Increasingly the print journals themselves won’t be there, and the content of journals is an order of magnitude more difficult, even when present, to browse than monographs might be. You can’t browse special collections and archives. And of course you can’t find what your library doesn’t own. There are limits.