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Back Talk-The 19th Fiesole Retreat (Or, Eating My Way Through Chocolate Shops)

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Back Talk — The 19th Fiesole Retreat (Or, Eating My Way Through Chocolate Shops)

Column Editor: **Ann Okerson** (Advisor on Electronic Resources Strategy, Center for Research Libraries)
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This year in Lille, France, some 80 individuals took part in the **2017 Fiesole Collection Development Retreat** (<http://www.casalini.it/retreat/>). We arrived at Easter-time, a holiday celebrated and venerated throughout much of Europe. We were surrounded by Easter decorations, superbly whimsical holiday chocolate (chickens, bunnies, lambs), and the buzz of the French elections, whose first round was held on the Sunday after our departure.

These retreats are almost 20 years old, and they aim to bring together publishers, librarians, booksellers, and other stakeholders from several continents, in order to review and discuss current topics in scholarship, new technologies, business models, and much more — as these relate to developing library collections. The **Fiesole Retreats** are intentionally structured to provide ample time and space for thoughtful discussion and should be on everyone's calendar, at least from time to time, to build understandings and networks that are uncommonly special. Our venue in Lille was the brand new **Lilliad Learning Center of the Université de Lille**. Led by **Julien Roche**, Directeur des Bibliothèques chez Université Lille 1, the Lilliad comprises a scientific university library, an event center with several amphitheaters and halls, and a research and exhibition center named Xperium. It is an inspiring venue, and we were delighted with the smart and dedicated staff. And lovely lunches! And the easy metro ride back into the city center to our hotels.

Once again, participants expressed their appreciation to the **Fiesole-based Casalini Libri** group and family, for inspiring the series named after **Mario Casalini**, the founder of this leading supplier of publications and technology solutions to libraries and institutions worldwide. **Michele Casalini** is a constant guiding presence at the retreats.

The program theme was “The Evolving Scholarly Environment,” and by the time this issue of *ATG* is released, readers will be able to peruse all the presentations on the **Fiesole** website (see: http://www.casalini.it/retreat/retreat_2017.html), including the excellent half-day Linked (Open) Data-Big Data pre-conference convened by **Prof. Dr. Andreas Degwitz**, Library of the **Humboldt University**, Berlin. For those (like me), for whom Linked Data is a bit of an abstraction, these papers made the concept far more down to earth, with presentations from Germany, Paris, **Casalini Libri**, and **Yewno**.

As the opening speaker on the first full day, I was tasked by convener **Laure Delrue** (LILLIAD) to launch a discussion of collection development present and future by looking at our collection development past. Researching this talk and presenting it as the “The Six Ages of Library Collection Development — in 25 minutes” (credit to **Julian Barnes's** *History of the world in 10 ½ Chapters*) was fun! Inevitably such talks are superficial; nevertheless, several themes emerged for me.

1. Initially, back in the “stone age” of libraries, libraries *were* collections. Books were scarce; libraries were even scarcer. Though some in that world may have longed for access beyond their own gates, those times were yet a long way off.

2. By the early to middle of the last century, libraries began to benefit from tools and technologies that made sharing increasingly possible. Yet, accumulation dominated long after access became possible; in fact it's still dominant today. This is neither good nor bad — it just is — but the balance is shifting rapidly.

3. Technology was always an enabler for libraries: libraries have always been part of the high-tech world of the times, from that “stone age” to today's “information age.” In every era, libraries have been places where the desire to expand knowledge led us to push the limits of the possible.

4. The flood of money that built the robust academic libraries and institutions in the 1960s to 80s masked issues that have now come to the fore. Contentiousness and uncertainty over roles and business models is the result.

5. “Network effects” have always played a key part in how we perceive libraries' activities and success. One of the information age's contributions is that at last librarians have a robust infrastructure for cooperation and sharing.

6. We are now speaking about library cooperation, in the recent words of **Filippos Tsimpoglou**, the new National Librarian of Greece: “Libraries, though acting as operationally autonomous entities, assign part of their relative autonomy to hierarchically higher cooperative entities to fulfill their missions more effectively.” Those are powerful words, which would have been radical 25 years ago.

7. In closing, I cited **MIT's Chris Bourg**, from her recent talk about the age of machine reading, and the possibility that more and more reading will become replaced by machines.

What then will be the future for libraries, publishers, and researchers, in that emerging Machine Age?

Even among the friends who meet in the **Fiesole Retreat** settings, it's sometimes hard to remain objective!

Some of the more provocative talks were by **Romyr Laurent** (INRIA, France), who described the fully centralized repository system being developed for France (we in the U.S. are suspicious of large centralized systems); **Clifford Lynch** (CNI, USA), who highlighted the ways in which U.S. developments in scholarly publishing are evolving differently from European counterparts; and **Anna Lunden** (BIBSAM, Sweden) on the careful, complicated, and perhaps controversial crafting of national “offsetting deals for open access.”

Once again, the **Fiesole Retreat** offered lots of food for the brain, as well as the body. For me, I took a day to visit a city that's been long on my list: Bruges, less than an hour's drive from Lille and a known world chocolate capital. As we marched down the pedestrian streets, one artisanal shop after another called out to me! One of the chocolatiers explained to me that there are 60 chocolate shops in the



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BUDGET: \$17 million

TYPES OF MATERIALS YOU BUY: Information in all sorts of formats.

USE OF MOBILE TECHNOLOGY: Pushing as much of our services and collections to mobile — meeting students in their spaces.

WHAT DO YOU THINK YOUR LIBRARY WILL BE LIKE IN FIVE YEARS?

The R.M. Cooper Library is the place to be on the Clemson campus. The main library is an extension of the classroom where students create knowledge. It is also the intellectual and social center of the university where students engage with each other and with faculty and tutors. The Clemson Libraries will continue to transform to provide a variety of spaces that support learning, teaching, and engagement as well as spaces that facilitate access to print and online information resources.



UC Merced Library

5200 N. Lake Road
Merced, CA 95343
Phone: (209) 228-4444
<http://library.ucmerced.edu/>

Answers provided by Donald Barclay, Deputy University Librarian.

LIBRARY BACKGROUND/HISTORY: University of California, Merced Library serves the youngest campus of the ten-campus University of California System. Since the campus opened for its first class of students in 2005, the Library has seen the student population grow from 850 to nearly 7000 students in 2017. A federally designated Hispanic Serving Institution, in 2016 UC Merced met the Carnegie Foundation's criteria for "higher research activity" and offers doctoral degrees in fourteen areas.

STAFF: 28 FTE. (12 MLS librarians, 16 professional staff)

BUDGET: \$4.2M

TYPES OF MATERIALS YOU BUY: The UC Merced Library collection is heavily skewed towards the digital. The Library's periodical collection (116,367 titles) is entirely digital. The Library's book collection consists of 123,036 print books versus 6,781,652 ebooks (this number includes 5,562,000 HathiTrust eBooks plus 1,219,652 eBooks acquired from publishers and/or aggregators). The Library's materials budget is just over \$1.5M per year.

WHAT DO YOU THINK YOUR LIBRARY WILL BE LIKE IN FIVE YEARS?

I think it will be a lot like it is today, which is to say focused on digital technology while still recognizing the value of print. While the Library's stacks could hold double the number of print books they currently hold, market forces and changes in scholarship mean that we won't be anywhere near filling the stacks in five, or even ten, years. I see the Library as relying more on instructional technology as our primary means of supporting student success and promoting information literacy. I see us doing more work to support faculty data management and providing more publication support services, especially for faculty and graduate students. The Library has focused on the creation of digital scholarly resources in favor of building a traditional print-focused special collections, and I don't see that changing. The UC Merced Library's somewhat boastful motto is, "Not what other research libraries are, what they will be." The accuracy of that statement seems to be holding up the more time passes.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR JOB: As the Deputy University Librarian I have four unit heads reporting directly to me — Research & Learning Services, Collection Services, Digital Assets, and Spatial Analysis & Research Center. I also do quite a bit of work representing UC Merced among the UC Systemwide Libraries, which consists of ten campus libraries and the California Digital Library.

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Bruges City Center, "and 14 of them are on my street," she said. Happily, I'd done my online research about Bruges's offerings and, having bought a few wares from 8 of them, I declared victory!

Next year's retreat is scheduled for Barcelona, Spain. As one who has participated in several **Fiesole Retreats**, I predict a wealth of ideas and discussion; and as a previous one-time visitor to Barcelona and its cultural treats, I can attest that the chocolate shopping there, while not as diverse as in Bruges, is also hugely excellent.

See you there! 🍷

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Engineering and Biotechnology News. I hope my ideas and experience in launching new journals and managing various science and technology publications will help the **Liebert** organization grow and flourish in the years ahead."

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