Little Red Herrings-Can a Leopard Change its Spots?

Mark Y. Herring
Winthrop University, herringm@winthrop.edu

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Little Red Herrings — Can a Leopard Change Its Spots?

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

At the time of this writing, the single biggest library-related news is Elsevier's acquisition of bepress [sic]. The move startled information pundits on several counts. First, none of us knew about the deal until it had been done. For whatever reason (a slip between the cup and the lip is certainly one possibility), bepress chose to let us find out via social media. I saw it first on the Scholarly Kitchen website (http://bit.ly/2uYXP4Z), and then later on a slew of other social media. The other reason that everything went viral at once proved, of course, to be that bepress, a kind of mom and pop Jedi-shop, sold out to, in the eyes of many librarians, the Darth Vader of vendors, Elsevier.

For decades, bepress did yeoman's work in the world of open access, providing a first-rate software platform for many libraries that could not afford to create one themselves. The cost of said software, while not cheap, was much cheaper than hiring three or four coding librarians to create an open access portal for an institution’s intellectual footprint. Those intellectual footprints, now institutional repositories, proved the perfect launching pad for open access content. Add to the first-rate software, first-rate customer service, and you have the formula for its success.

For most of those decades, vendors like Elsevier smiled bemusedly at libraries trying to gain an alternative foothold for expensive subscriptions. In many ways, the efforts of libraries were cute, and vendors like Elsevier patted us on the head and raised prices for key journals another few percentage points. Open access, it appeared, was going nowhere fast, and assurances were made that nothing would come of it, but to throw that nest of portable subscriptions away, I'm already married.” Could it have been that Elsevier knew this was a hornet's nest best not to be kicked by it, but to throw that nest onto the social media highway and deal with the buzz later? Hard to say.

After the sort of esprit d'escalier apology, assurances were made that nothing would change and content would remain our own; bepress would remain as committed as ever to keeping everything functioning normally, customer service would remain first class, and the pricing structure would remain the same. Furthermore, our content will remain as portable as ever. The key takeaway here is that all of this is true now.

What we do not know is whether Elsevier will begin charging for various portions of the service, such as the dashboard or for reports to users about the use of their content. Will there be a charge after a certain number of submissions, and how quickly, if at all, will prices begin to rise? How soon, if at all, will Elsevier begin replacing bepress employees with their own? In the eyes of many colleagues, keeping things functioning normally after what appears to be a dinner with the devil will take a spoon so long it has not yet been made.
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Optimizing Library Services — Tracking E-journal Perpetual Rights: A Discussion Among Publishers, Vendors, and Librarians

by Carol Seiler (Account Services Manager, EBSCO Information Services) <CSeiler@ebsco.com>

Column Editors: Caroline J. Campbell (Promotions Assistant, IGI Global) <ccampbell@igi-global.com>

and Lindsay Wertman (Managing Director, IGI Global) <lwertman@igi-global.com> www.igi-global.com

A recap of the 2017 Electronic Resources and Librarian (ER&L) session “Tracking E-journal Perpetual Rights: A Discussion Among Publishers, Vendors, and Librarians,” Presented by Teri Oparanozie, Sam Houston State University; Jackie Ricords, IGI Global; and Carol Seiler, EBSCO Information Services.

Tracking perpetual access rights is an essential part of the electronic library system. But who is responsible for tracking this information? What information needs to be tracked? This session provided a forum for discussing how librarians, publishers, and vendors can collaborate to make tracking e-journal perpetual access and entitlement easier and more efficient.

The well-attended session, led by the session moderator, Teri Oparanozie, started with a detailed look at what issues and questions exist with perpetual access.

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My only experience with Elsevier is having to pass on many products because it takes so much of our scant resources. The content is fine, of course; it is just the king’s ransom we must pay to make Elsevier materials accessible requires us to say no, more often than not.

And that brings us, finally, to the leopard and its spots. Can he change them?

I suppose the best answer for now is that there is a first time for everything. Even for Elsevier.

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the future of how research information gets published, shared and accessed. There’s also the steering committee for Metadata 2020, a group effort to advocate for richer shared metadata. Scott says he will keep pushing for open data and a more open, affordable and transparent scholarly communication ecosystem. He’s not going to go looking for consulting gigs, but if some interesting projects came up, who knows? Scott plans to do some professional and personal writing, he is doing a lot of exercising and even cooking.

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