November 2013

People Profile: Douglas LaFrenier

Editor

Follow this and additional works at: http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg

Recommended Citation

Editor (2009) "People Profile: Douglas LaFrenier," Against the Grain: Vol. 21: Iss. 6, Article 36.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.2381

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.
• Because AOD deposit accounts allow the firm to pay only for the articles its research actually uses, there is a “just-in-time” dynamic with great appeal to the productivity needs of the modern company. (The academic model, by contrast, is “just in case”: A large corpus of material is made available just in case a researcher may need it.)

With regard to this last point, it is worth pointing out that a product like AIP Articles On Demand is great for a company with moderate research needs. But no company with heavy research activity will find a better bargain than a straightforward subscription, because subscriptions offer the best price-per-download rate for high-use organizations. Indeed, this is part of the reason we tend to be wary of offering article-bundle products like AOD to academic institutions. The need to maximize the serials budget makes the price of even the biggest AOD bundle look far more affordable than a typical AIP journal subscription. Many librarians will be drawn to what seems like a lower-cost version of the same content. But it can quickly become apparent in many institutions that the download activity will require that an AOD bundle be replenished several times a year to keep up with researchers’ needs, so the “value” of the bundle can disappear very quickly.

What Future do We See for Products Like AIP Articles On Demand? Will We Offer it to Academic Institutions as well as Corporations?

The broader answer is that AIP already practices differential pricing. We tier our journal prices according to the research levels of our subscribers, so that smaller, less research-intensive institutions pay less than bigger, more research-intensive institutions. Academic institutions with consortia licenses to AIP content pay differently than single-site subscribers. Institutions in emerging economies pay little, or nothing, to access AIP content. We want to offer our content in whatever way best suits the needs, interests, and budgets of our customers. While we do fear cannibalizing our bread-and-butter subscriptions by offering an article-bundle product to academia, we are also — librarians and publishers alike — moving to more evidence-based metrics of price and performance. COUNTER is the key initiative here, but measures of quality (whether Impact Factor or eigenvalues or h-indexes or the next new thing) will matter, too. It is not hard to imagine the near-future, when an information provider and an information consumer will together find an optimal way to deliver content not for the cheapest price, but for the best value. Subscriptions, site licenses, customer-owned-and-operated archives, author- or funder-paid open access, article-based deposit accounts — all of these options will be part of the menu of access models available to the librarian in the brave new world that is right around the corner.

Is Deep Dyve Another Game-changer?

As I was writing this article, Deep Dyve announced a pay-per-view service that will charge only 99 cents an article for a 24-hour “rental.” This has been called an iTunes-like model, but users cannot download or save the article — it literally is “pay per view,” since the only thing the buyer can do is read the article onscreen. Deep Dyve also offers $9.99 per month and $19.99 per month subscriber plans with more user rights than the 99 cents per article option. But it is clearly the 99 cents price point that has attracted everyone’s attention. Publishers’ single-article fees tend to be high enough not to undermine the value of a subscription. But such formulations derive from the print era, when single-article sales were all done by third parties and were hard for a publisher to regulate or monitor. The article economy in the days of print was thus largely an “invisible” economy, which publishers feared more than encouraged. In the current online era, when article sales can be much more effectively tracked, the new Deep Dyve model offers an experiment that many publishers will want to join. If Deep Dyve can get enough publishers involved to achieve the same kind of comprehensive service that Amazon provides for books, it could become an enormously significant player. Sure, we’re all nervous about cannibalizing subscriptions — but in a moment of huge economic uncertainty for our traditional revenue streams, experiments like this may be the only way to find new and sustainable business models.

I don’t think I told y’all about seeing the gorgeous Kathy Ray at the Acquisitions Conference in Oxford, England last year! Did I? Kathy was one of the excellent speakers at this Conference and I discovered that she is married to Ron Ray once of University of the Pacific! Ron has left libraries and is now working in IT and he and Kathy are located in beautiful, exotic Sarjah in the United Arab Emirates. Talk about glamorous!

And, guess who else has traveled to foreign parts? The industrious Joseph J. Brannin has continued on page 61