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If Rumors Were Horses

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Taking Charge: Preserving Our Digital Heritage Part I

by Amy Kohrman (Marketing Director, LOCKSS/CLOCKSS, 1450 Page Mill Road, Palo Alto, CA 94305; Phone: 650-721-5838) <akohrman@stanford.edu> www.clockss.org

This issue is the first of a two-part series on digital preservation. Six librarians and one publisher describe their experiences with digital preservation. Some have fashioned their own solutions. Some have entrusted others to safeguard their collections. Unifying them is the desire to ensure the survival of e-content for future generations. Because so many insightful essays about digital preservation were submitted, both the February and April issues of Against the Grain will be devoted to this important topic.

In full disclosure, I am the Marketing Director of LOCKSS and CLOCKSS, and many of the contributors participate in one or both of these preservation methods.

The articles we present speak to four fundamental principles in the area of digital preservation. First, stakeholders — publishers, libraries, states — must take charge of the preservation of their digital collections. Second, the misperception that digital preservation is costly and labor intensive, or that it is a luxury, must be overcome. Third, unlike print-based collections, access to and the integrity of digital works are much more vulnerable. Finally, these materials must be preserved not simply because they are important today, but because they constitute our scientific, historical, cultural, and economic heritage.

Inside this issue, you will hear from:

• Vic Elliott, Director, Scholarly Information Services and University Librarian, The Australian National University, a tireless champion of digital preservation, argues that libraries have lost much of their influence and power and describes how the CLOCKSS initiative offers them a chance to regain some of what they have lost.

• Glen Worthey, Head, Humanities Digital Information Service, Stanford University, details the kind of loss that is possible in an all-digital medium. Glen describes what happened recently at two online literary journals: The Absinthe Literary Review and Exquisite Corpse. Fortunately, these “born digital” humanities journals had made arrangements for preservation; had they not, their valuable content would have disappeared without a trace.

• Heather Staines, Global eProduct Manager at Springer Science + Business Media is committed to helping libraries preserve their collections. A frequent speaker at library conferences, Heather writes about trying to navigate the unchartered waters of eBook preservation and Springer’s diversified approach to meeting its digital preservation needs.

• Peter Burnhill, Director, EDINA Data Centre, University of Edinburgh, writes

If Rumors Were Horses

Lots continues to happen in our space.

The fantastic Tom McNally has been appointed Dean of Libraries at the University of South Carolina. Tom has served as interim dean of the University of South Carolina libraries since 2007. He joined the libraries nearly 19 years ago as university librarian for public services. “The library plays a key role in the process of teaching, learning and research,” McNally said. “We must continue to build and conserve our collections. We must work every day to develop services that keep pace with the technologies that our users are employing. We must remodel our libraries to reflect the changes in the way our students learn and interact with one another. Each librarian we recruit must be a leader capable of creating initiatives and moving them into daily practice.” Tom earned a bachelor’s degree in education from Kent State University and a master’s in library science from the University of Washington. He was a librarian at Ohio State University, the University of Michigan and Loyola University in Chicago before joining the University of South Carolina’s library staff in 1991. McNally served as director of Thomas Cooper Library from 2003 until he was named interim dean of libraries in 2007, replacing Paul Willis, who retired. For more than 200 years, the University of South Carolina libraries have grown and matured from humble beginnings in Rutledge Hall on the historic Horseshoe. Today, the collections span eight buildings and include tens of

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ALA Annual June 2009 04/08/09 04/29/09
Reference Publishing September 2009 07/08/09 07/29/09
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millions of items, which are viewed by more than a million visitors each year.

According to LJN Dawson (2/4/09), Amazon has announced that it will release Version 2.0 of the Kindle on Monday, February 9. And The Boy Genius Report has some information about the design of the new product. It’s a little bigger and has gotten rid of the buttons that caused you to flip to the next page. But it’s still pricey!
http://www.ljndawson.com/
http://www.boygeniusreport.com/2008/10/03/amazon-kindle-2-ebooks-its-way-to-bgr/

And just got a column from the incredible Michael Pelikan <mpp10@psu.edu> about Kindle 2.0. He says he was waiting for the release which occurred just a few days ago! Michael prefers the Sony Reader to the Kindle, at least that’s what it seemed like to me. See this issue, p.8

And Todd Rix <trix@coker.edu> (Electronic Resources and Bibliographic Instruction continued on page 14

<http://www.against-the-grain.com>
A while back, Katina Strauch invited me to contribute a column to ATG, and I happily agreed to do so. Hence this is the first of what I hope will be an ongoing feature of the journal. After nearly thirty years in the book trade, I hope to offer a few kernels of wisdom gleaned from that experience.

The title for this column comes from a small Columbia Gorge town in Oregon named Mosier (population 430). I have the great good fortune to live about five miles up the hill from Mosier, in a house that looks out over the Columbia and has views of Mt. Hood and Mt. Adams. Those of you who know me will appreciate that Mt. Hood holds a special place in my heart, for it’s there I and two Oregon librarians, Faye Chadwell of Oregon State University and Nancy Slight-Gibney of the University of Oregon organize the annual Acquisitions Institute at Timberline Lodge. I’ll admit to being biased, but the Lodge is the best venue for a library conference on the planet. Mosier has a lot going for it — a fantastic location, creative and resourceful residents, and a great restaurant, Good River. Also, what it no longer has is a library. The city lost the lease on the building that housed our little gem of a library, and to date no replacement facility has been found. At this writing the library’s future is uncertain; at least residents have a very commendable alternative at the Hood River Public Library five miles away.

The loss of our library has prompted me to think about other casualties in the library and vendor community. Perhaps recent events have informed my reveries — the demise of major financial and manufacturing giants to name but an obvious few — but it brings me back to a topic several of my friends and I have been mulling over for the past couple of years. Change — what does it means for libraries, for publishers, for vendors? What do we risk losing? What new opportunities might we encounter? How will our worlds look in a few years time?

Change is of course not new. Rather, it’s the intractable questions posed by change that seem so challenging, their answers so elusive. Look at the vendor community. If someone had suggested in 1967 that the Richard Abel Company would disappear in less than a decade, people wouldn’t have believed it possible. Or, if ten years later someone speculated that Faxon would implode, it would have seemed ludicrous. Yet so it is now with GM, AIG, and others. In our own industry there are several once noble but now enfeebled companies lurching toward oblivion.

Some will argue this is normal: market forces and trends favoring the innovative and nimble, and discarding the inept and poorly managed to their fate. The burning question in my mind, though, is this: how does this ultimately affect librarians and the patrons they serve?

Let’s focus on opportunities and risks. Under the opportunities column we must first mention the greatly enhanced range of resources now available with the likelihood that ongoing digitization and capital investment will yield more content, access, and ease of use. Libraries have benefited from products and services arising from other arenas (e.g., Amazon) and their patrons’ expectations and skill sets have largely been shaped by these same entrepreneurial enterprises.

Among the risks: that the new generation of digital natives will bypass libraries altogether (OK, nothing new about that argument) and reside quite contentedly in the Google embrace. That publishers, faced with ever dwindling demand for print resources, will either price content out of reach or simply decide not to publish in print. (Perhaps e or print on demand is the future.) That traditional vendors, faced with eroding margins, fragmenting markets, and stretched resources, will simply fail. That much of the supply chain of products and services essential to libraries will wind up in the hands of people to whom libraries are secondary at best, and who may well see little or no incentive to provide genuine, responsive service to meet their needs.

Is there some middle ground — a compromise that can yield world-class service coupled to the dynamism of the market? Is there a way to preserve the best attributes of conventional scholarly publishing reconfigured in a viable, sustainable economic model? Is a marriage of traditional vendor services with cutting-edge technologies, wrapped around a coherent, comprehensible package possible?

These are the questions and issues I hope to explore in the columns to follow. I welcome your feedback.

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Librarian, Coker College, Hartsville, SC) just posted on the ATG NewsChannel Forums about the Kindle. They have used the Kindle to receive the New York Times daily.

http://www.against-the-grain.com/d/node/167?new

Speaking once more of the Kindle, rode in a cab to the airport in Denver with Mark Stover (Interim Associate Dean, Library and Information Access, San Diego State University) <mstover@mail.sdsu.edu>. He pulled out a Kindle from his briefcase and said he liked it very much. However, he said that he did not like reading the newspaper on the Kindle. Hmmmm...

According to the Bookseller, “Sony has revealed that it has sold 300,000 of its digital e-book Reader globally since the device was launched in October 2006 and that it is working on a wireless version of the product to rival Amazon’s Kindle. So far three million books have been downloaded from its online library, which is home to 57,000 titles. … Amazon won’t release sales figures for the Kindle but gadget industry experts widely report that sales of Kindle and Sony Reader are running neck and neck.”


It’s been unseasonably cold in Charleston. I usually wear my coat once or twice and I have been wearing it non-stop since early December. Crazy! But I know that a lot of you have had it even worse. Maybe the ground hog will have enough of winter by the end of February? I certainly hope so.

The indomitable Sandy Thatcher <sgt3@psu.edu> tells us he’s retiring as director of the Penn State University Press in June 2009, but will continue as an acquiring editor for the Press in social sciences. Sandy’s port of operation, however, will be Frisco, Texas, where he’s moving next summer. Sandy will remain on the AAUP and AAP copyright committees and the CCC Board of Directors. Plus, he will continue to contribute his incredible thought-provoking and thorough columns to ATG! Hooray! See this issue, p.69.

Another university press mover and shaker, Kate Wittenberg has joined Ithaka’s Strategic Services group as Project Director, Client and Partnership Development. In her new role, Kate will focus on building partnerships among scholars, academic centers, publishers, libraries, technology providers, societies, and foundations with an interest in promoting the development of digital scholarship and learning. Kate spent most of her career at Columbia, where she was the Editor-in-Chief of Columbia University Press until 1999, and went on to found and direct EPIC (the Electronic Publishing Initiative at Columbia) for the university. EPIC was a pioneering initiative in digital publishing, and a model publishing partnership for libraries, presses, and academic IT departments. Some of the ventures produced by EPIC include CIAO (Columbia International Affairs Online), Gutenberg-E (a reinvention of the monograph as an electronic work), and Jazz Studies Online. Ithaka’s Strategic Services group specializes in helping promising digital projects to develop sustainable organizational and business models, and working with established institutions to rethink the ways they serve their core constituencies. Laura Brown, who leads the Strategic Services group says, “It is hard to imagine a more respected or resourceful voice in the field of digital publishing and we look forward to her help identifying and cultivating continued on page 16