People Profile: Vic Elliott

Editor
Triumphing over Chance ...
from page 18

publishers and libraries was formed in 2006 to develop the concept. LOCKSS remains the software platform, at the core of the network, but the business model is quite different in several important respects.

CLOCKSS is indisputably a dark archive. Decisions on whether to provide access to archival content, to open up part of the archive, are taken not by individual institutions but by the CLOCKSS Board itself. Such decisions will be prompted by major trigger events such as the corporate failure of a publisher, the catastrophic and sustained failure of a publisher’s delivery platform, the cessation of publication of a particular title, or a publisher’s decision no longer to offer back issues. And when access is opened to endangered content, that access is not limited to CLOCKSS participants, or to current or former subscribers to that licensed content, but to everyone throughout the world. In effect, the content is made available under open-access conditions.

The first of two such trigger events occurred in late 2007. It arose from the intention of SAGE Publications to discontinue the provision of online access to the journal Graft: Organ and Cell Transplantation. Following a decision by the CLOCKSS Board, the three volumes of Graft published by SAGE were copied from the seven archive nodes or servers within the pilot system and in early 2008 made available to the world free of charge through two hosting platforms at Stanford and Edinburgh Universities. Although the hosting platforms are strategically positioned, in the United States and Europe, access is available worldwide to either platform. The Graft (and subsequent Auto/Biography) experience is a good example of what can happen in the world of proprietary digital resources and a timely demonstration of the ability of e-archiving systems like CLOCKSS to respond effectively.

It would be wrong to see CLOCKSS as a successor to LOCKSS, as somehow superseding a precursor system. In fact, they are complementary systems. It is a matter of focus, a concentration in the case of LOCKSS on the local community, and in the case of CLOCKSS, on the global community. A reliance on CLOCKSS as the global archive of last resort does not preclude working with LOCKSS to meet local community archiving needs.

Why CLOCKSS?
The question whether or not to choose CLOCKSS is in some ways redundant. You don’t choose CLOCKSS. It chooses you. For whether you support the initiative or not, it will be there to support you, should a trigger event occur and access to subscribed (or un-subscribed) scholarly content be denied. That this is so is evidenced by the Graft example or experience.

Perhaps I should try to answer a different question — why is my university willing to act as a host library, to operate a CLOCKSS box and seek to attract Australian and New Zealand content into the CLOCKSS dark archive?