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## Back Talk

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**Back Talk**  
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claims to serve more than 10,000 libraries in 46 countries, and that it processes 9.6 million requests with 95% fulfillment. It lets individual libraries hold onto their print books while sharing them with others if they want, but it also enables regional or multi-library repositories to share their collections with libraries outside their groups.

The authors don't jump right out and say this, but I wonder if this wasn't their underlying intended message. [This is probably the time that I need to remind you that I am a member of the OCLC Board of Trustees but also state that I have no insight into the intents of the authors other than to cast light on this important topic.]

Personally, I have an idea that while it isn't too early to pose the question about the implications of eBooks and regional collaboration for the management of print book collections, I suspect we are indulging in a rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic exercise. We begin this exercise by accepting that print books will always be needed and that access to the entire corpus of recorded knowledge is important. If we suppose that all that libraries will provide access to is the HathiTrust corpus then perhaps that will be true since it focuses on dead (out-of-print) books. But that isn't the case as access to new eBooks and commercial super collections will be there for readers. And as for access to the entire corpus of recorded knowledge, we need to remind ourselves of the 80/20 rule. Libraries at a relatively few super research universities actually need to try to own more than 20 percent of the monographs that have been published, if that much. Most academic libraries just need to understand and meet current needs.

I suggest that we try to minimize our efforts to rearrange the deck chairs and instead focus on building digital collections while continuing to collaborate with each other where it makes sense. One only needs to look at the value of the RapidILL program (<http://rapidill.org/Default.aspx>) to see the value of libraries working together to provide access to journal articles. The value of super quick collaborative user-initiated interlibrary book loan systems is also undeniable. And yet where such programs fail to meet all needs we have the WorldCat Resource Sharing system as a backup. But our focus needs to be on further developing digital collections. Readers want to read. Let's forget about the safety of our biblio Garden of Eden with its "books, bricks, and mortar" and "head into the wilderness" to electronically

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give them what they want: reading material. I think this needs to be the focus for publishers, vendors, and librarians alike. This has already happened for academic journals, let's make it happen for books. 🌍

**Rumors**  
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Speaking of conflicts with Charleston, **George Machovec** tells me he'll be missing **Charleston** this year because of the **Colorado Alliance's** quarterly deans/directors meeting right in the middle of the **Conference**. **George** says that it's his favorite conference and he hates to miss it!

Moving right along to misses, **Scott Plutchak** will not be in **Charleston** this year either because of an important medical meeting! Fiddlesticks! **Scott** says he will definitely be back next year, (hopefully with his group **The Bearded Pigs**) but, hey, y'all, let's start a petition against any meeting other than **Charleston** the first two weeks of November!!

And yet another voice from the past! Remember **Daryl Rayner**? I sure do! **Daryl** used to write **Rumors from Paddington** (British Rumours) for **ATG** many years ago. What fun they were! At that time **Daryl** was working for **xrefer** (which is rebranded now as **Credo**). In 2006, **Daryl** and several of her colleagues started **Exact Editions** which works with magazine publishers to sell subscriptions and produce app versions to digital editions and their archives. In fact turns out that this month, they are launching the full archive of **Gramophone** which began back in 1923.

And speaking of 1923. That reminds me of

your friend and mine — **Copyright** (that would make a great kid's book, wouldn't it? can't you see **Mother Nature** explaining copyright to the **Lorax**?) As we all know — books published before 1923 pass into the public domain! <http://www.unc.edu/~unclng/public-d.htm>

The famous chart referenced above was created by **Lolly Gasaway** who has been writing copyright questions and answers columns for **ATG** for the past 15 plus years (see her column this issue, p.66).

DRUMROLL!! We are happy to announce the publication of **Copyright Questions and Answers for Information Professionals: From the Columns of Against the Grain**, by **Laura N. Gasaway**. This is the first book in an exciting new series called "**Charleston Insights in Library, Archival and Information Sciences**." You can order the book online through **Purdue University Press**, and copies will be available for purchase on site at the **Charleston Conference**. A separate "buy the book" link is at: <http://www.thepress.purdue.edu/titles/format/9781557536396>.

PS — The **Charleston Conference** is pleased to announce that through our publishing partnership with **Purdue University Press**, the 2009, 2010, and 2011 **Conference Proceedings** will be avail-



able online for free, and print copies will be available for purchase on site at the **2012 Conference**.

<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/charleston/>

As always I seem to be running out of room, but a few tidbits before I sign off. **Deb Vaughn**, our fabulous book review editor has a new baby boy! Little **Edward** was born on July 10. Sadly, **Deb** is leaving the **College of Charleston**, but she plans to

continue to write book reviews in between feeding the kids! Family of five! Hooray! Oh! Her new email is <Vaughn.deborah@gmail.com>.

Second tidbit — **Xan Arch** had her new baby. She is just as gorgeous as ever! See **Facebook!** <http://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10100308692434683&set=a.729213722693.2315868.222150&type=1&theater>

And talk about gorgeous! **Barbara Casalini's** daughter **Arianna** and her husband **Michele** (who restored **Barbara's** 35 years old **Vespa** for the occasion) are pictured above.

As Porky Pig would say .... that .. that... that's all, folks! (for awhile!) 🌍

# Back Talk — The Implications of eBooks and Regional Cooperation for the Management of Local Print Collections

Column Editor: **Anthony (Tony) W. Ferguson** (Library and Information Science Consultant and former Hong Kong University Librarian; now relocated to Sahuarita, Arizona) <anthony.ferguson185@gmail.com>

According to some, God told Adam and Eve that whoever ate the forbidden fruit would get escorted out of Eden. Eve decided to eat a piece of the fruit and told Adam what she had done. Adam had to decide if he needed Eve enough to eat some of the fruit and get shown the door as well or to stay where he was and let her go on her way. In the end he decided that he needed Eve more than the comforts of the Garden and so he ate of the fruit and they both headed for the wilderness.

Librarians have been and are now faced with a similar choice. Do we want to stay in the safety of the Garden with our books, bricks and mortar or do we want to go into the wilderness for who knows what.

What are the implications of regional cooperation and the growth in academic library eBook collections for the management of print collections? Given the ongoing budget problems being experienced by most libraries and their decreasing print circulation rates, these questions are of growing importance and has led to the publication of an interesting new OCLC Research report: *Print Management at "Mega-scale": A Regional Perspective on Print Book Collections in North America*. Authored by **Brian Lavoie**, **Constance Malpas**, and **J. D. Shipengrover**, it is freely available on the WEB: <http://www.oclc.org/research/publications/library/2012/2012-05.pdf>.

It is of importance to note that the authors have used OCLC's database to look into the future and envision "what if" 12 different regional collections were to emerge and work together to better meet the research needs of their readers. It presents a number of data points/observations, conclusions, and explores several potential courses of action generated by the current study and an earlier OCLC Research report, *Cloud-sourcing Research Collections: Managing Print in the Mass-digitized Library Environment* (Malpas 2011). Here are

the things in these reports which especially interested me:

## Data Points/Observations

- A significant share of the books in ARL print collections are duplicated in the **HathiTrust Digital Library** digitized book corpus and this rate is growing. The median level of duplication was about 19 percent in June 2009 and is now more than 30 percent. [pp. 8-9]
- A significant portion of the **HathiTrust** digital books found in ARL collections are "typically held by many libraries." [p. 9]
- While there is significant overlap within this ARL print and **HathiTrust** digital corpus titles, there isn't much overlap in the non **HathiTrust** portions of the ARL collections.
- Indeed, it is common to find unique or rarely held titles within and across these regional collections and this finding accelerates if we look just at non English language materials.
- "There is as yet no indication that institutions are willing to dispense entirely with their local print collections." [p. 13]
- "... institutions continue to favor direct access to print originals over a deliberate redirection of demand to digitized surrogates." [p. 12]
- Big is better. The more books found in one of the regional collections, the more diversity will be found.
- Libraries are working on strengthening cooperatives of all sizes to take advantage of the bigger is better principle and

to share/reduce the costs associated with managing print collections.

- While amalgamating several regional collections into mega collections might be the way to go, none exist nor are likely to develop given the social and technical difficulties of such collaboration. [I note the tried and true observation that "collaboration is an unnatural act." But unnatural and impossible are not necessarily synonymous.]

## Potential Conclusions

- Because of the significant overlap between the ARL library print collections and the **HathiTrust** corpus, libraries are already redundantly paying to store these materials and are likely to do the same to repair/re-store them.
  - Because, on the one hand, institutions want to hold onto their collections and are still reluctant to wholesale substitute eBooks for printed books, but on the other hand they don't own a significant share of the books published, libraries still need to cooperate with each other to provide rich access.
- Neither shared last copy regional repositories, nor regional cooperatives, will provide their member libraries with access to the lion's share of the world's non-digital books. What is needed is some sort of larger than regional cooperative (big is better) which allows libraries to keep their books but still enables them to take advantage of each other's holdings.

## Recommended Course of Action

While this report sheds light on all sorts of topics related to the management of print collections, it concludes by suggesting that before we can clearly see into the future, we need more real data, as opposed to the hypothetical data about regional collaboration using the OCLC database. We need a greater understanding of how large and small regional cooperatives are actually operating and the benefits of such collaboration in the amelioration of the costs associated with the storage/preservation of lesser and lesser used print materials.

## My Own Thoughts

As I concluded my reading of the *Print Management* report, I couldn't help but wonder about the intent of these OCLC authors: Was it to encourage readers like me to think, wait a minute, don't we already have a super international way of sharing resources, the WorldCat Resource Sharing program? This system

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