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At Brunning: People & Technology: At the Only Edge that Means Anything/How We Understand What We Do

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Zeitgeist Drops: The Road to Mendeley

In what many open access true believers may think is treason, Mendeley founders sold their research reference manager slash pdf organizer slash science community social sharing Web startup to Elsevier.

In case you need a Mendeley primer, it is a reference manager for pdf. You find an article on the Web, download the pdf, and move it to sharable folders. You can also create properly formatted bibliographies or endnotes and you search your research as easily as you search the Internet. Most operating systems are supported and storage is free for your first two gigabytes.

Mendeley Institutional is Swe’t’s licensed version. It provides a useful dashboard for institutions to manage and track use presumably to better evaluate subscriptions. It will continue under the new owner.

For five years registered users held Mendeley in high esteem. It was a darling among open access advocates who used it as a smooth and easy way to promote shared access without interference from publishers. In Mendeley you could read your science, annotate your articles, and follow the research behavior of other registered users.

Surprisingly there was little vitriol over this move. Some researchers may simply be tired of trying to outsmart Elsevier. Others were happy for the young engineers who made money and could move on to other startups. A few were going to move on to non-Elsevier properties.

In remarks posted online, Mendeley’s co-founder Victor Henning, explained recent developments. He mentioned the close cooperation between Elsevier and other science publishers to get where they are now. A key advantage was Elsevier’s meta-data from Scopus that improved the information Mendeley could use to catalog and index articles. Another was the significant leverage Elsevier had to create with Mendeley an access environment simply unavailable in the decentralized world of library’s subscriptions. Then there is user data.

Henning points out that Mendeley’s business practice always shared data with publishers and other consumers. As early as 2009, one year after Beta release, Mendeley announced there were 100,000 registered users who had posted eight million articles. By 2012 Mendeley claimed two million users and who knows how many articles.

With this acquisition Elsevier owns significant data on how researchers use STM content. This helps guide their own title adds and drops as well as track the use of open access content. They know who uses what, how much— all that Facebook-type data.

Hard on the heels of the press release, Thomson, proud owner for many years of three reference managers — Endnote, Pro-Cite, and Reference Manager — announced a free Web-based version of Endnote. And the Thomson download page offers a short tutorial on how to transfer Mendeley folder contents to Endnote. It’s just drag and drop.

Your Links:
hhttp://elsevierconnect.com/what-you-really-want-to-know-about-mendeley-and-elsevier/
http://blog.mendeley.com/academic-life/mendeley-has-two-million-users-to-celebrate-were-releasing-the-global-research-report/
http://www.mendeley.com/global-research-report/#UXsqP7XCZ8E

Downloads from the Zeitgeist: DPLA

The Digital Public Library of America went online this April. A reception was held at the Boston Public Library to introduce the DPLA to the world; quite possibly glasses of digital champagne were held high to mark the event.

The DPLA crosses second in the digital derby for public access to public domain and rights cleared content. The HathiTrust broke the tape a long time ago. We’ve not heard much from them lately. They’ve got the full-text index that may be searched and analysed as data but doesn’t retrieve books outside public domain.

The DPLA is a nice search engine. It fits perfectly into the world;  quite possibly glasses of digital champagne were held high to mark the event.

The thing is kids today and many of us want to know other stuff. Write a good paper about Jay-Z and Beyonce engaged in post-cold war rapprochement with Cuba. What are the historical roots of rap?

The other thing is that the public library lives by its appeal to locals. They struggle to justify funding from outsiders. Who needs local funding for online if here is DPLA?

Thing is we took it for granted that someone would do this and they did. We can only react.

Your Links:

Another Book: The New Digital Age
by Eric Schmidt and Jared Cohen
What Would Eric Schmidt Do?
The digital era is the Internet era. I poz facio, the Internet/Digital Era is the Google Era.

We should always pay attention when Eric Schmidt, former Google CEO and Google DPLA for its first decades speaks or writes. He is, after all, the oracle of Sunnyvale and he thinks and pronounces from within the center of a company whose search engine, for many, defines the Internet.

A few years ago Mr. Schmidt moved over from his leadership at Google to allow a founderd, Larry Page, to take the company forward into the millennium’s next decade. Since then Eric has dabbled in areas of Internet policy — a broader, more global and historic role — suitable of his friendship and collegiality with Al Gore and other thinkers on Google’s Board.

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The New Digital Age isn’t about Google as much as it is about the world Google helped create and runs. In fact, if you pick up the book to get some insights into the company, it will disappoint. Google is everywhere and nowhere.

Schmidt stopped by the Colbert Report on the book tour. The show — catch it at the Comedy Central Website — is its best summary. Schmidt, who cannot stop smiling by nature — a net worth of seven billion helps — talked about the great things the Internet gave us in such a short time and what it promised. Central to digital pills, driverless cars, and hairstyling robots was connectivity. Today two billion users were connected to one another through the Internet benefiting from its disruptive impact on everything.

Of course, Colbert wanted a pair of Google Glass, the soon to be released browser in your eyeglasses mobile computing tool. And Colbert praised Angry Birds’ transformative impact on his life. Schmidt didn’t break smile and continued his argument, central to his thesis, of the certain disruption of five billion users of cheap smartphones worldwide. The New Digital Age is all about how to shape this world for the better.

Most of the book reads like a Foreign Policy article on global connectivity. The world they visited over the last few years profoundly touched them. They experienced a troubled world coping primarily through Internet connectivity.

In post-Saddam Iraq Schmidt and Cohen observed the absolute necessity of handheld phones to coordinate daily life. They concluded that virtual life trumped the physical world whose infrastucture was absolutely disrupted.

Similarly, the Arab Spring brought the virtual world into direct conflict with the physical. Social media could be used to circumvent dictatorial control of a country’s Internet. Literally revolution was a virtual step ahead of real world oppression.

Fortunately, the New Digital Age is not so naive as to argue connectivity is an exclusively positive force.

Schmidt finds no love won in and about China. He writes carefully about state terrorism — the Chinese government as cyber bully — and China’s perennial disregard for intellectual property — the advantages of state capitalism. Schmidt seems poised to say more about China and its relationship to Google but he stops short — preferring to frame China’s Internet role as the world’s problem.

On Colbert, Schmidt smiled when he told Colbert it was a real book, 330 pages, no pictures or charts. He thought this was a good thing. Actually, some charts could have helped explain the data and arguments made from the data. Also, the argument, developed from observation from both inside and outside the agency of change — a company like Google — could have used more research than that cited. There are only two books cited while the rest are Internet links from what’s available from a Google search of the open Internet.

Without more authoritative sources, the book risks being supported on a wobbly research stool of just observation and Internet sources.

For example, recent scholarship disputes the view that social media played the major role in the Arab Spring. Human events aren’t so easily reduced to technological change. And Mr. Schmidt, why not a single mention of books and technology’s role in the wider access and availability of knowledge?

If we are going to believe, understand, and do what Eric Schmidt would do, we need more than foreign policy lite. What Eric would do is probably what Google would do and does; it takes much more to save the world than a search engine and one of its guiding leaders.

So, now that I have a clearer picture of why IBCs have been established, the difficulties they experience, and at least a little about the life of a ICB librarian would be like, what should I do? Stay here in Arizona enjoying the life of a semi-retired academic librarian, or should I return to China to work in an IBC library? I will let you know what I decided to do in my next Back Talk article.

Post Note

Following the publication of my February 2013 column concerning Martin Luther King and dreams for libraries, I received an email pointing to a group which played an important role in the advancement of minority librarians during and since the time of Dr. King: The Black Caucus of ALA. You can go to http://www.bcla.org for a complete history of the Black Caucus and the part it played in all of this. Thanks to Pamela Blu, the Associate Director for Technical Services and Administration at the University of Maryland’s Thurgood Marshall Law Library for sharing this information with me.

Resources Reviewed


