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The Leaders Predict

Libraries won’t die—they just need to redefine themselves. They will continue to maintain and enhance their roles as places of information, education, culture, and enjoyment. Themes from the New York Public Library summit, “Global Library Strategies for the 21st Century.”

“We will have to rethink materials selection in an electronic environment. Storage and preservation will remain as issues. Copyright is the greatest barrier to putting the Library of Congress on a penny. While electronic access is unlikely to replace the book collection in the near future (or ever), some categories of information and knowledge will become totally digital (such as statistics, lists, stock market quotations, anything that is immediate, changing, hard to keep up with in print, and distinct—requiring no abstract or conceptual thought.) Marilyn Gell Mason, director, Cleveland Public Library, Library Journal, “The Future Revisited,” July 1996.

Project TULIP (The University Licensing Program), a five-year experiment in providing online access to scholarly journals, has concluded that the transition from conventional to digital libraries will take much longer and cost more that commonly thought. The full report is available at: http://www.elsevier.nl/locate/tulip/  

Dear Publishers:

We Love Your Home Pages But...

Publishers have embraced the electronic revolution. We see home pages, World Wide Web sites, fulltext availability, catalogs on CD-ROM, discussions with authors, and so forth. Are librarians responding? If you aren’t getting the response that you would like from your electronic product, here are a few pointers.

Provide content, not simply bibliographic citations. Librarians are used to having content; they will buy it, if you make it easy and cost effective for them. And — content is more important than the provider. Remember, in the paper world, the library has many books and journals which are shelved by subject, not by publisher. Forcing a librarian or an end user to come to you will not serve you well. Librarians and users want content from many different publishers. The distributed model of delivering content (publisher-driven) is not as attractive as the aggregated model (having access to many different publishers’ content in one place).

Make the negotiation easier. Libraries are understaffed and becoming more so, but they are devoted to their end users and their budgets in that order. Forcing librarians to negotiate individually with each publisher is a step backward.

There’s upside potential here for publishers. It’s easier to negotiate with a handful of aggregated providers than with large groups of librarians or end users, and the result should be more access, more business, and more compelling services for users.

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Buyers Talk

In a meeting at the NASIG serials conference this past spring, librarians were asked what traits they valued most when submitting an order to a vendor, distributor, or publisher. In the order of preference, the traits were: good communications, responsiveness to inquiries, and reliability. It was interesting that discount did not make the top list.

“I would rather use a vendor than go directly to the publisher. Vendors understand the needs of libraries, and their customer service departments are more responsive. They help run interference, and their service is better.” Muriel Jones, Head of Acquisitions, Towson State University, MD.

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The Trends...

✓ Most urban public libraries have created a Web page in the past six months.
✓ Many academic technical services departments have organized into teams. It’s hard to find out who the new decision maker may be for collection development and vendor selection.
✓ Some academic librarians are beginning to cancel their CD-ROM subscriptions and close down their CD-ROM towers in favor of commercial databases over the Internet. One librarian cites her first offerings as OCLC’s FirstSearch, Cambridge Scientific Abstracts, GaleNet (primarily for the Encyclopedia of Associations), UMI’s ProQuest Direct, SilverPlatter, and CARL UnCover using password-protected links.
✓ For the next five years, libraries will keep paper plus electronic copies. But, this cannot last.
✓ Over 75 academic institutions have merged the library and the computer center.
✓ It is a time of leadership transition in the large urban public libraries. Fifteen of the one hundred largest library directorships are held by interim directors, including Boston, Minneapolis, Seattle, Detroit, and San Jose.
What New Services Do Librarians Want?

Is there someone out there who can help librarians fill these needs?

- A vendor who will negotiate with and acquire electronic journals for libraries.
- Publishers who will supply their audio books in cases usable for circulation.
- Vendors who can acquire and catalog materials in languages other than English, particularly Spanish, Japanese, and Chinese. (Ken Dowlin, San Francisco Public Library)
- Using a Web browser to place orders with vendors, verify fund reports within the acquisitions module of the local library automated system, send payment authorizations to campus accounting, view and download a bibliographic record into the local system, post the title on the virtual New Book Shelf and then circulate the title to a waiting patron. (Nancy Dennis, University of New Mexico)

In The Trade

Ingram Book Co. has eliminated the supply of CD-ROM's to libraries. This is part of their retreatment in the bookstore market from handling over 2,000 titles to about 300 products from "traditional books publishers." They cite the lack of ability to return materials to software developers as one of the main problems.

Baker & Taylor has introduced a new series of automatic shipment programs to libraries called "Automatically Yours." The program includes both frontlist and midlist authors and streamlines the acquisition of books from popular fiction authors. Both programs in the series include trade hardcover editions and are available with complete cataloging and processing to the library's specifications.

A new subscription agent, Basch Subscriptions, has been formed to help librarians buy serials in a cost-efficient and effective way. The basis for the service is a new serials management software developed and tested in conjunction with W.H. Everett and Son, London, international booksellers and subscription agents.

Ovid Technologies and the Institution of Electrical Engineers (IEE) have reached an agreement in principle to offer site licensing of the INSPEC database loaded locally on hard disc or accessed remotely via the Internet for a fixed annual subscription. The agreement is in response to libraries and other organizations requesting site licensing.

Ameritech Library Services (ALS), the industry's largest provider of local online library systems, has announced that it will realign resources, concentrating on its core business of library software and network solutions. A staff reduction of 150 employees has occurred.

Marketing Tips: What Works in a Brochure

You spend a lot of money marketing your products to libraries. How do you market them? Will the right person read what you send? In a recent survey, The Charleston Report talked to the people who buy your products. We asked them what made them read some brochures and what made them pitch them in the familiar "circular file." Here is what they told us:

Illustrations were mentioned first! A small illustration which breaks the text up can catch your eye and make the difference as to whether you read something or not.

An attractive type font that "bolts" the title is as important as a good presentation and nice paper (not newsprint, please, but not too "slick" either). And larger print is better.

Quote from reviews and endorsements. What do other similar professionals think of the work? "One of my peers who thinks that a work is valuable says a lot to me. It's the first hurdle and gets my attention."

Catch the eye. Either a letter or a brochure folded into three parts has to catch the person's attention who is opening the envelope. Positioning the front of the brochure so that text or an illustration immediately catches your eye rather than a blank page is important. "Put your most important selling point first. I like to know the subject of what I am looking at right away."

Make it easy to order the item. Many automated library acquisitions systems require that the ISBN be used as the primary access point.

Full order information must be included.

A word on pricing. Make the price clearly evident. "Searching for the price on a big, slick color brochure really makes me mad. I feel that the company doesn't want me to know the price; they must think it is too expensive."

Be careful not to make a promotion or gimmick too specific or restrictive.

And, finally, make the brochure a uniform size which makes it possible to be filed. "I notice that types of material come out in groups during the year. I may not have the budget at that time to purchase the title. Also, I may want to buy something if I have money at the end of the year. Make the brochure uniform enough that I can file it."

Provide follow up information. A telephone number is important. A World Wide Web or Internet address is also valuable.

There you have it. From the customers' mouths!
A Charleston Survey — Public Libraries’ Future

A survey of fifteen directors of large public libraries concluded that their greatest concern for the future is the effective use of technology to provide service to the public. They worry about how they will remain current and where the funding will come from to replace outdated equipment. There is a dynamic tension between the library’s bread-and-butter services of book circulation and the growing technology-based services. Most directors feel they are at the center of the technology within their community, often being the organization which has created the city/county Web page on the Internet.

The majority of public libraries now have their own Web page. If you want to check one out, the Rochester Hills (MI) Public Library won the 1996 Gale Research Award for Excellence in Reference and Adult Services for its home page. It serves as a source for community and library information and as a basis for learning about the Internet and other electronic resources. The address is: http://www.metronet.lib.mi.us/ROCH/rphl.html.

A new larger role is in training the public to access electronic resources. Public libraries provide free Internet access, and the staff are becoming experts in information navigation services. In addition to providing computers and training classes, many libraries have established in the past few months circulating collections of CD-ROM’s and software. The core title list does not exceed 100 and two-thirds are for children.
The Future of Library Technology

Client-Server: Is It Dying at an Early Age?

The usual buzz about client-server in the professional computing literature has been deathly silent for the last six months...replaced by plenty of hype about Java and ActiveX. What are these technological trends really about? And, what's relevant to those of us in the information industry?

Making the Most of the Network. client-server architecture stores programs (clients) on "local host" systems, usually PC's; Java and ActiveX send programs down the network along with relevant data — eliminating the need to store anything locally.

Elusive Benefits. Though welcomed as the solution to many problems in computing, the benefits of client-server architecture have proved elusive in large-scale real-life computing. Users in all industries have reported that client-server is more complex and, therefore, more expensive to maintain than earlier architectures.

Client Glut. Vendors have introduced hundreds of proprietary clients, each of which must be loaded on the local PC. One librarian in an urban public setting, supporting a network of over a thousand PC's, has declared "client glut" and now refuses to load any additional proprietary software.

Already a number of leading companies, both in the online library systems industry and the information industry, have committed to network PC's and Java-esque programming. Those within the industry will do well to focus development on generally available tools and Web access for those products which are intended to be networkable and widely distributed.

Proprietary, stand-alone products will find their future in a highly niched, specialized setting. A word to the wise is sufficient!

Rebecca Lenzini

ALA Hot Topics

Attendance at the ALA summer conference in New York over the Fourth of July weekend turned out better than most had predicted. A total of 23,747 attended, down only 600 from last summer's Chicago meeting. Traffic in the exhibits was consistent. There were more one-day badges than normal, causing speculation that these attendees may not have as much buying power as out of town conference goers. Although booth sales were down, the number of exhibitor badges issued was higher, probably because of the New York location. So, what was hot?

- The creation and use of Web sites was the priority topic for librarians.
- The trend by publishers to make their individual materials available online in fulltext format was evident.
- Several library consultants reported at ALA that database and electronic resource RFP's now outnumber automated system RFP's. Over 200 system and database RFP's were out to bid as the summer closed.
- Many librarians felt the show was "flat," meaning there was nothing new or exciting being shown in the exhibit area.

Dear Publisher, continued from page one

Look for electronic value-added. In the electronic world, librarians and end users are excited about the possibility to "click" on a bibliographic citation and pull down the fulltext for viewing — obviously a scenario which includes content from many different publishers in the same location. You can help facilitate the library's provision of a comprehensive range of services and text.

Avoid exclusive deals. The ultimate goal is simple — providing librarians and end users with access to content/fulltext from as many directions as possible. The time is now. Publishers — secondary and primary alike — you are holding the ball. You have the content. Without the content, there is nothing to serve. The ball is in your court! Return it!

By The Numbers ...

- Public library connections to the Internet have grow 113 percent from 20.9 percent in 1994 to 44.6 percent in 1996. According to a National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS) study, public libraries serving populations under 500 are 58.6 percent less likely to be connected than those with service populations over 100,000, with this discrepancy increasing.
- The Queens Borough Public Library announced that more that 15 million items were checked out of its 63 locations for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1996, setting what is believed to be the highest circulation figure for any library ever.
- The percentage of American adults who visited their public library at least once in the past year: 67.
- The percentage of American adults who say they read a newspaper in the past day: 45.
- The number of books Americans bought in 1995: 2.2 billion.
- The percentage of American adults who think computers will render libraries obsolete: 8.

Future Issues Will Feature:

- Librarians Evaluate Web Sites
- How to Write Letters That Really Sell
- What's Hot from the Library and Information Technology Association/Library Administration and Management Association Combined Conference
- New Trends in Discounts