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# Academic Libraries After Print

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## Advice for new librarians

*Reference skills are a dime a dozen. What else are you bringing to the table? Have you looked at our Web site? How can we make it better? What is your subject specialty? I want to know how you are going to help me. Don't know what else I may be looking for? Ask. LEARN SPANISH.*

—PATRICK DUKE
Library Director,
Wilsonville Public Library

Two general implications concerning the future of academic libraries evolved from an analysis I did of two ebrary e-content surveys. The analysis confirmed views I have held for some time. First, e-content will supplant print for academic libraries but the efficacy of the librarian will remain and probably increase long after the research value of the physical collection is relegated to historical significance. Second, the academic library function will not be outsourced. The three primary foci of the academic library will be acquisition, instruction, and publication.

Only the most stalwart believers in the primacy of paper distribution systems can deny the probability of its disposition by electronic counterparts. The eclipse of paper distribution by electronic requires anytime-anywhere access to the Internet. The advancing merger of cellular and IP technologies will provide the mechanism for the distribution of information resources currently distributed physically. There are converging technologies and economic exigencies that mitigate in favor of this view. The appearance of Kindle by Amazon and Android by Google and T-Mobile are recent evidence of progress towards convergence. The promise of interactive marketing and distribution through a proliferation of constantly evolving Internet access devices along with all of the services and products that can be marketed through them is driving the Internet toward this economic nirvana with increasing energy.

The critical mass point for the change to electronic publication is dependent upon the percentage of the population that has wireless access to the Internet with devices suitable for viewing and reading documents. At the point that income from electronic distribution outweighs the income from a tandem print/electronic distribution strategy, print will be eclipsed. Paper will

likely be available on demand at premium prices. Electronic counterparts will drop significantly in price as the costs of maintaining print distribution are separated from electronic distribution.

The functionality of the academic library will persist in the context of electronic resources. There are indications which suggest that the integration of information resources into the curricula by librarians will become more important as information increasingly becomes the raw material of modern culture and economy. In general, the library will become an even more integral and dynamic component of the endeavors of its academic community as the library operations associated with the provision of electronic resources evolve.

However, the transition from physical to electronic distribution of information is changing the nature of library operations. Most library operations associated with print resources will have electronic counterparts. Some remain but diminish—i.e. circulation scales down to authentication. Some expand—i.e. acquisitions, instruction, and publication. Librarians are likely to be engaged in intensified efforts to identify Internet based resources relevant to the specific needs of their institutions, to integrate information literacy comprehensively throughout the curriculum, and to develop content management systems to assist the academy in organizing and providing access to its own production of information.

### Acquisition

The services of librarians were required in the two dimensional world of print because of its volume and complexity over manuscript production. Librarians brought specialized mediation to the task of acquiring the increased volume of resources provided by the printing press. The environs of the electronic information sphere

require the same interventions on the part of professionals, albeit using the developing technologies of information and communication. The dramatically rising volume and complexity of information resources distributed via the Internet necessitates change in the methods of mediation. Google and search tools like it will handily assist in the provision of focused answers to surprisingly wide types of information needs. It will not systematically identify curriculum-relevant Internet resources for integrated use. The acquisition function of librarians will be engaged in identifying, organizing, and presenting the subset of information across the spectrum that is relevant to the curricula of their particular institutions.

It could be argued that the tools evolving on the Internet to identify the subsets of information relevant to an individual will also evolve to automatically identify those that are relevant for an institution. Conversely, it can be argued that those tools, even for the individual, will continue to require ongoing mediation and decision making with respect to accessing and purchasing options within constantly changing information needs. The same mediation and decision making processes will be required within the institutions of higher education. The past ten years of expanding cooperative purchasing arrangements in the typical academic library provides evidence. Universities purchase resources from a growing list of vendors and within a growing complexity of cooperative relationships. The processes required in the ongoing evaluation of those resources are also expanding.

The acquisition role of the library professional extended into the electronic realm will also have to accommodate an ever increasing volume, diversity and complexity of open source and freely available Internet-based information resources. The expansion of the electronic information sphere is accel-erating in both breadth and depth. Commercial, corporate, government, academic, organizational, and personal sites are proliferating. Their pages are not just simple, flat presentations of pictures and words. Web sites connect to increasingly diverse and complex data sets. The information sphere and the tools and systems for navigating and using it are multiplying. Many university library Web sites, as an example, currently organize by program area hundreds of links to information sources available without charge over the Internet. These resources also require the acquisition processes of discovery, evaluation, and communication.

## Instruction

The shift in information access has increased the need for instruction in the rapidly expanding global information sphere. The days of a library tour that centered on the catalog and how to find things in the library are gone. Instruction in and assistance with the use of continuously evolving information resources will ascend in importance in the academic library. Instruction will increasingly become the focus of efforts to systematically and comprehensively provide information literacy instruction horizontally and vertically throughout the curriculum. The need for students and faculty to become more information savvy in an increasingly information dependent culture will be reflected in the ongoing efforts of librarians to integrate instruction in the use of relevant information resources into the various academic programs. Librarians will need to stay abreast of the expanding content of the information infrastructure as well as the continually evolving electronic tools for accessing, organizing, and using information.

Different views of appropriate basic information literacy at the moment include instruction in the use of general e-book and e-journal databases, an introduction to con-

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*I look for energy. I look for people with a desire to continually improve themselves and the organization. I look for tolerance. I look for optimists. I look for people with a bias for action over analysis, the proactive type.*

—DARREL CONDRA
Library Manager,
Tualatin Public Library

## The future of librarianship and how to keep up

*Join and be an active member in your state organization, and attend other library and technological conferences, Educause, for a great example. Read the literature, and network with colleagues. The field is as old as the hills and will not go away, but it will undergo immense transmutations.*

—Jan Marie Fortier, Ph.D.
Dean of
Information Resources,
Mt. Hood
Community College

cepts of peer review, evaluation of Internet information resources, discussions of plagiarism and copyright, instruction in citing resources, an exploration of search strategies, the selection and use of search engines, and the use of tools like federated search engines. The list is not comprehensive and continues to grow as new information resources and tools for accessing them proliferate.

The North Central Association criterion for assessing library viability no longer focuses on counting "staff members and the square footage allocated to the library and to book inventories." Libraries "exist to support teaching and learning. To make learning resources an integral part of a student's education, an organization will have to invest in appropriate materials and equipment and provide the staff that can maintain these resources, train students in their use, and provide assistance when it is needed."

The information literacy role also becomes more central as evaluation and assessment of learning outcomes associated with information literacy become a more central concern of accreditation. In harmony with this increased focus on assessment of information literacy outcomes, ACRL (Association of College and Research Libraries) articulates the need for comprehensive, structured instruction (See ACRL Guidelines for Instruction Programs in Academic Libraries). ACRL provides a vision of both horizontal and vertical integration into the curriculum. Information literacy instruction should be integral for all incoming students in core requirements like writing courses. It should also progress through the curriculum with vertical integration at the program and course levels.

Although the transition to the completely digital library will require considerable sorting out, librarians are likely to play a role in academe more intimately integrat-

ed into the instruction mission of higher education. Librarians will be members of teams that design learning environments. As higher education integrates more thoroughly into the fabric of an information centered economy, the demands of life-long learning will restructure the higher education learning environments. Adaptations in the design of learning environments will be set in motion by the continually evolving technologies of teaching and learning as well as the technologies of the information and communication spheres. Specialists in creating learning environments and those focused on articulating relevant access to, knowledge of, and participation in the information sphere will be working more intimately with faculty in the design and implementation of those environs.

### Publishing

A growing percentage of libraries are participating in the distribution of e-content. While the efforts are fairly rudimentary, it is likely that academic libraries will play an increasing role in e-publication for their institutions. As the administration of content management systems becomes more focused on facilitating peer review and research processes, the skill sets and propensities of librarians ascend in appropriateness to the task.

A modest majority (56 percent) of the librarians in the March ebrary survey responded that they were either currently digitizing content or actively considering it. (See ebrary's Global eBook Survey, p. 8) Content management will become increasingly important for librarianship, particularly as libraries assume more of the publishing role for their communities. As the peer review processes evolve in the context of the Internet, the functions of publishing may be disassembled and absorbed by

individuals within higher education—i.e. librarians, faculty, technicians, and editors.

A glimpse of the publication role of librarians can be approached through a view of the processes of peer review in the context of the changing information sphere. The peer review process, among its other functions, can be viewed broadly as a mechanism by which a community evolves a piecemeal consensus over its research findings. Librarians provide their expertise mostly in the access portion of the peer review processes. They acquire and provide access to research resources. The current role of librarians derived from the last major upheaval in the changes in the mechanisms of information distribution, which occurred as the products of the printing press proliferated across Europe. The increased volume of information gave rise to the current mechanisms of peer review that rely heavily on editors and their reviewers for the initial selection processes in the distribution chain. And they have relied on librarians for much of the acquisition and access part of the process.

A future publication role for libraries may include configuring and maintaining content management systems for the facilitation of peer review processes. This is very speculative territory; however, the tension between the academic community and the current peer review/publishing model has a significant group of academics looking for alternatives. The responses in the ebrary survey indicate that libraries are cutting their teeth on a publishing role for their institutions even though the content at this juncture tends to be mostly special collections or materials for limited or internal distribution.

## Conclusion

It is my view that librarians will be more in evidence and play a more integral role in academe as the operations of libraries transi-

tion into an e-distribution environment. As higher education expands its life-long learning mission through ever more innovative learning environments, librarians will likely have a part integrating information literacy instruction into them. They will assist in identifying and providing access to the resources and tools supportive of research. As publishers for their institutions, they will configure and manage the content management systems used in peer review processes and contribute to the metadata for organization and access of the resources published by their institutions.

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2007 Global Faculty E-book Survey. http://www.ebrary.com/corp/.

## Advice for new librarians

*I need librarians who keep up in their area of expertise, who seek out opportunities for continuing education, who read and participate in our library community, who care deeply and passionately about what we do and put patrons needs before their own needs … I need risk takers. I want to hire librarians who thrive on change. I need change agents… Collaboration is a key trait for any new librarian.*

—Nancy Hoover
University Librarian,
Shoen Library,
Marylhurst University