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The Year in Review

Deborah Carver
University of Oregon

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University of Oregon

Editor's note: The following are news clippings from a Website on higher education in Oregon—the year is 2004.

September 12

In response to static enrollments and another \$40 million cut to higher education for this biennium, all three OUS research libraries are preparing to reduce their expenditures for serials by ten percent. The Chancellor expressed concern about rising costs of journal titles, but basically called it “a black hole that we can no longer afford to fill.” Many key research journals will no longer be available in the state, as all three institutions plan to target the most expensive titles. “We wish we could work together to help minimize the impact,” said one acquisitions librarian, “but unfortunately we have to identify titles quickly, and cooperating at this level can be very time consuming.”

October 1

It's the start of another school year, and faculty on many campuses across the state are jumping on the online bookstore bandwagon. Amazon.com's decision last year to form partnerships with many scholarly presses has drastically increased its inventory and ability to market directly to university faculty. A German professor at McKenzie University said he was amazed at how quickly he could get books from overseas. “It used to take the library several weeks to place the order and get the material I needed for class,” Herman Schmidt said. “Now, with one click, I can get a book from Berlin in a couple of days, and the price is good, too. My research has taken a quantum leap forward.”

December 3

A student at Binn-Lenton Community College was awarded \$2.3 million in damages yesterday on a sexual harassment suit brought against college administrators and librarians. Jane Doe claimed that she was repeatedly exposed to graphic sexual material in the library, and her lawyers successfully argued that she was subjected

to a hostile learning environment as a result. Ms. Doe said that she made the decision to take legal action because college officials did not take her concerns seriously. The library has no policy or procedures for handling such complaints from students. “This matter caught us completely off guard,” admitted Head Librarian Frank McCluess. “We knew it's been an issue for public libraries, but we serve adults.” College attorneys plan to appeal the case. An ACLU spokesperson was sharply critical of the court's decision, saying it was a blatant attack on the freedom to read principles. The appeal process is expected to take several months.

January 28

Citing net savings running well into seven figures, the OUS Library Council (an advisory board made up of members from the eleven higher education campuses in Oregon) released a sweeping plan to reduce cataloging staff across the system by 65 percent. A spokesperson for the group said the decision was based on the results of an important OCLC study which indicated that the phenomenal growth in the size and coverage of the WorldCat database has largely eliminated the need for libraries to employ their own catalog librarians. “Most of our members will find everything they need amongst the 100,000,000 records in WorldCat,” said an OCLC representative when contacted. “Even if they don't,” he went on to say, “cooperative cataloging in the United States has really run its course. The cost is prohibitive and completely unnecessary given the unprecedented access we have to cheaper labor markets around the world.”




March 6

Despite the pouring rain, students at Midwest Oregon University staged an angry demonstration yesterday claiming that the University has not fulfilled its pledge to embrace multiculturalism. The Hispanic Student Alliance (HSA) argued that the University culture is overwhelmingly white, even though the last census data indicated that Hispanic Americans were the fastest growing population in the state. Students pointed to the fact that there wasn't a single Hispanic working in high visibility services such as the library. University officials had intended to make minority scholarships and faculty recruitment the primary focus of the

first major fundraising campaign, but the emphasis has been on the new 30,000-seat football stadium. "If we aspire to be in the PAC-10, this has to be a priority," argued the athletic director.

May 31

The OUS Board approved a contract with Questia today to provide reference services to all students in the OUS system. This represents the final contract in the Chancellor's vision for the OUS Virtual Library. The service will be in place at all twelve campuses in the system, including the newest campus in John Day, which will open in the fall. 

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