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E-Commerce and Information Delivery

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In the broadest sense, e-commerce is the sale of products and services over the Internet. It goes beyond using a Web site to market products and involves placing an order and paying online via a credit card. What distinguishes information products in this environment is that they can actually be delivered over the Web in real time.

1997 figures estimated Web-based retail sales at \$2.5 billion, which is merely one tenth of one percent of the total retail sales of \$2 trillion. Despite dramatic growth, e-commerce is still in its infancy as many of the rules of doing business are changing. While 98% of the US population have telephones, only 30% have Web access. To achieve its full potential for both individual consumers and institutions, Web access must reach critical mass. This means simpler tools, more confidence in secure financial transactions, and an understanding of the dynamics of the Web environment.

The Consumer Market

Let's take a look at what's working on the consumer side and see how that might apply to scholarly publishing. User behavior on the Web differs based on the interactive capabilities and expectations for this new medium. Innovative companies have begun to figure out what elements are key to their success.

Dell Computers, one of the early entrants to e-commerce on the Web, proved the model that just-in-time delivery of hardware could work without needing a storefront. And **Egghead** software recently closed their stores to become a Web-only business.

For Websites to contribute to a company's success, they must utilize the unique capabilities of the Web to support a company's growth. A recognized brand or a certain amount of free information will attract users to a site and the hosts need to decide what to offer free to a broad group of users and what to offer dedicated users for a fee. Repeat customers are more valuable than one-time visitors so the site must engage the user and involve them in a continuing activity or interactive dialog that allows them to contribute to the site. It is essential to know your customers by collecting good data on those visiting the site to further develop it and to solicit advertising. Users may find information interesting, but the key to success is supporting users in making a decision and then enabling them to act on it.

Amazon.com (www.amazon.com) provides considerable information about books and an opportunity to order them. Contributed reviews allow users to participate in the process of book selection. Despite its popu-

larity, Amazon realistically projected that they would not be profitable for the first few years and would continue to invest in expanding the services offered and building their brand name on the Web.

The Wall St. Journal (www.wsj.com) has been extremely successful, due in part to brand recognition. Their data show that at least 25% of their online users do not have a print subscription which prompted them to develop and enhance services specifically designed for the readers of the Interactive Edition. They just added a travel service called **Business Fare** which includes online reservations provided by **The Trip.com**.

New services such as www.etrade.com provides users with the opportunity to manage their own portfolios in the tradition of **Charles Schwab**, while www.thestreet.com provides users with the intelligence to make selections and decisions for a nominal fee. Combining these two services would further enhance the user experience. Users are looking for answers, not just information.

Some reference publishers recognize that the real value of their content on the Web is to serve as a gateway or "portal." Portals offer users a one-stop-shop experience by providing an aggregated layer as part of their interface. Similar to indexes, portals are subject or function specific and add value by selecting qualified Websites, identifying content on those sites and enabling the user to link to them or perform some action.

For example, **Solusource** (www.solusource.com) is a new offering from **Thomas' Register** focused on providing engineers with information that will lead to the purchase of parts needed in designing products. Dialog's new venture (www.planetretail.com) offers a similar approach by cross-indexing product types from comparable stores by category. This enables a shopper to find all turtle-necks sold by those whose catalogs are included, (**Eddie Bauer, Land's End**, etc.), then rank them by price, link to additional information and order online.

Implications for Publishers

Users on the Web increasingly expect information to be current and functional. Once they identify and locate a desired item, they want to be able to order it easily and if it exists in electronic form, they expect immedi-

ate gratification by viewing, printing or downloading it. Libraries are working on delivering this capability for their users.

Indexes created by secondary publishers were the first item to be made available online via **Dialog** and then locally on CD-ROMs which now seem to have a limited future technologically. These databases are being migrated to Web sites hosted by various distributors. Primary publishers are devoting resources to converting their print journals to PDF or SGML formats and making them available over the Web. Ideally users want to move seamlessly from the index to the fulltext of articles.

Vendors such as **OCLC, EBSCO** and **SilverPlatter** are working to deliver this capability and have begun to use the term "integrator" to describe the range of functions provided. After searching the index, the user is linked to the full image of an article if there is a paid subscription or to a document delivery or interlibrary loan service to acquire the article.

The demands for a traditional publisher to migrate their legacy print journals, has prompted the larger ones to acquire the technology to find a scalable solution. **Elsevier** acquired **Lexis-Nexis** to facilitate their entry into electronic publishing and subsequently mounted their new offering, **Science Direct**. **Kluwer** just announced the acquisition of **Ovid** which brings them both technology and a host of databases from which to link to their full image content.

Science Direct and **Ovid**, along with **Catchword** and **Highwire Press**, fulfill the function of an electronic printer. They convert and host files, providing links from the citations in the bibliography to the full image of the journal or to an index. In addition to providing the technology, they offer 7x24 hour customer support which is new to print publishers.

Every generation of technology provides the opportunity to adapt to the new media by transforming information products rather than just transitioning them to a new format. When indexes first began appearing on CD-ROMs, they were criticized for not taking advantage of the search capabilities for which they are valued today. Journals published in PDF replicate the print and do not offer linking from citations to fulltext which some will argue is the real value of e-journals.

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Much of the demand for Web-based publications is driven by the need for access from the desktop. However, the potential of the medium is so much greater. E-journals are likely to go through a phase of deconstruction, whereby those features that are time sensitive, such as classified ads, news and rumors, will be distributed more frequently. Longer articles, which are not likely to be read online, can be distributed in print and the online version will link to subsequent correspondence. Letters to the editor will shift to letters to the author with an opportunity to create an online dialog through a moderated listserv.

Indexes and the journals they link to can serve as the focal point of services such as the one offered by **EI Village** to engineers. **Elsevier's** recent acquisition of **EI Village** and **Kluwer's** acquisition of **Ovid** point to the value of positioning respected indexes as the front end to a collection of journal titles. This speaks to the need for a user-oriented approach focused on a variety of services designed for a professional group.

Community-based Websites will include job listings, access to the fulltext literature through established indexes, discussion groups, meeting announcements, a referral

service, training opportunities, and other ideas still to be introduced. Members and their institutions may pay a flat fee to access key features of the site and transactional fees to cover document delivery or additional value-added products.

Economic Model

According to **Evan Schwartz**, author of "Webonomics" and a writer for *Wired* magazine, there are new economic models emerging on the Web where providers seek to inspire loyalty with incentive programs like those offered by the airlines. This approach offers more promise than either the digicash or micropayments which have yet to be seen in widespread usage as anticipated.

In addition to the traditional advertising and subscription-based approach, creative alternatives are being tested. One of the initial hybrid models under development in scholarly publishing is the **Peak Project** (www.lib.umich.edu/libhome/peak/), between **Elsevier** and a dozen research librarians.

Libraries pay a greatly discounted rate for large blocks of articles which can be selected from any of the 1100 online journals. Additional articles needed beyond the initial block purchased are acquired at a higher individual document delivery rate. This has been compared to assembling one's own collection of hand-picked articles which are then made available to the institutional community.

Document delivery has been an increasingly popular option for many years and will likely become more so in the electronic environment. The traditional indexes which identify articles in response to a user's query will be seen as tools to drive demand for document delivery. As publishers make their journals available through various distribution channels, the user is more likely to discover an article for which they don't have a paid subscription. This will support the migration to a more demand-driven model for journal articles.

Different subscription models will emerge offering current issues only with an option for a slightly higher fee for accessing backfiles online. Even if the user had print issues, it
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"Elsevier's recent acquisition of EI Village and Kluwer's acquisition of Ovid point to the value of positioning respected indexes as the front end to a collection of journal titles."

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(to some degree) reporting served to separate those companies making the shortlist from other respondents. All three finalists, **Academic Book Center**, **Blackwell's Book Service**, and **YBP** offered sophisticated online information and selection systems. Other factors such as references and pricing also were crucial; however, the quality of existing online systems to aid selectors, expedite acquisitions, and a commitment to cooperation (or partnership) in developing additional online capabilities to support information sharing and coordination among participating academic libraries throughout Ohio were pivotal in the final selection.

Beyond bibliographic and local history information, an approval-plan vendor's online database can provide a vehicle for cooperating institutions to share information and to incorporate it into the selection process. While **OhioLINK's** central database provides information on the extent of duplication among collections (70% of the titles are held by only one or two libraries and 14% by more than five), such information is after-the-fact. If one wishes to redirect purchasing from unnecessary redundancy to assuring access to as much of the world knowledge base as possible, such information is needed before expenditures are made, and a major book dealer's online catalog can be an effective venue (or so we believe).

Complementing identification and selection, most approval vendors and other firm order services are providing a variety of on- and off-line services to expedite the material to a user. Invoices can be sent to online systems, and vendors can provide information to **OCLC's PromptCat** or provide their own **MARC** records—over the Net or on other media.

Out-of-Print, Rare, and Antiquarian (OP)

While e-commerce is permeating all areas of collection development, nowhere has it been more transformative than in the out-of-print market. In the bad old days, we would prepare lists to be sent to a few, trusted OP dealers. If they were unsuccessful, we would, usually fruitlessly, advertise the titles in **AB Bookman's Weekly**. With the advent of **Interloc** (<http://www.interloc.com>) and **Bibliofind** (<http://www.bibliofind.com>), the options to identify possibly available copies of OP titles greatly expanded. Today, **MX Bookfinder** (<http://www.mxbf.com>) compounds this power. One can search **Advanced Book Exchange**, **AntiQBook**, **Bibliocity**, **Interloc**, and **Powell's Books** (with searchable listings from hundreds of dealers) with a single query. Instead of a quote on a single copy, one may identify a dozen or more copies listed by participating book dealers, often with considerable range in price. Reports by **N. Kraft** and **D. Marshall** in **Acqnet** (Vol. 8, No. 29, Sept. 20, 1998) add additional sources

for European titles. Before, it was usually, do you want the copy or not? Now, price, edition, and condition become added selection elements.

As with much computer-derived information, identifying a dealer with the copy desired is not the same as purchasing the book. Libraries long have debated over whether OPACs should optimistically inform users that a specific title is "available" or realistically advise them to "check the shelves." Our experience is that one-third or more of the copies identified through these dealer networks will have been previously sold (in a worldwide market, there is more incentive to list titles than to delete them). Still of a dozen copies reported available, losing one-third leaves seven more copies than would have been previously identified.

With the ability to view the wares of hundreds of dealers, institutions and dealers are moving beyond traditional bounds of trust. An institution wishing to purchase materials identified through **MX Bookfinder** or another dealer network will have no experience as to the reliability or honesty of a listing dealer. Conversely, the dealer may never have heard of many small potential institutional customers and will have no experience with how long payment may take for materials supplied against a purchase order. A solution for both sides can be found in electronic and/or plastic money, the subject of the second part of this perspective. 🐻

Profiles Encouraged



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Early on: I was born in Miami Beach, Florida and grew up in Pittsburgh and St. Louis.

Current residence: Durham, NH

Education: BA, Washington University; MLS Columbia University; MA University of New Hampshire.

Summary of job experience: I have been in and out of libraries since 1970. Also worked as a freelance researcher, helped found an adoption agency, was managing editor of a scholarly journal, taught English composition, am now Head of Collection Development at the University of New Hampshire.

Family: Three daughters (Kate, 24 years old, living in Norfolk, Virginia; Abby, 21 years old, living in Gunnison, Colorado; Lucy, 9 years old, fourth grade in Durham). I also have four stepchildren ranging in age from 18 to 39. My husband, Don Lent, is a painter who teaches at Bates College and is running for State Legislature in New Hampshire this fall. We consider our three cats—Billy, Fritz, and Teddy— family members.

Most recent accomplishment: This is ongoing and daily: negotiating the demands of job, home, being a soccer mom, and helping my daughter navigate the landmines of fourth grade.

Biggest goals: Finish my novel. Climb Mt. Washington.

Two recent fond memories: A three-day walking tour of Yorkshire that I took with my husband, my sister, and her husband to celebrate my 50th birthday. Coming to Charleston for the first time and seeing the palm trees at the airport; the soft air and "southern smell" reminded me of childhood days in Miami.

Books I've enjoyed recently: John McKee, *Story*; Roxann Robinson, *This is My Daughter*; Jonathan Harr, *A Civil Action*.

Pet peeve about this profession: Librarians who graduated from the Door-mat School of Library Science.

If I could do anything: I'd like to be Head of a Foundation that would dispense money to any organization or person that I wanted to support.

Biggest surprise: How surprising life is. 

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will be more efficient to be able to search and retrieve an article read several months before from an online file rather than attempting to locate the print issue.

The Future

Despite the fact that the proliferation of computers seems to have merely redistributed the printing function, there is a unique opportunity ahead of us. As access to data is made available anytime from anywhere, the Web offers the ability to replace local print files in various locations with fewer centralized electronic files. With an upcoming generation of employees who thrive on **Palm Pilots** instead of **DayTimers**, the time is near when software will evolve to locally store those files of greatest interest and bookmark with confidence those files to be accessed again at a later date, knowing they will still be available.

The basic Web ad today resembles a billboard which is a passive experience like television. Ads of the future will be more customized, focused on the users' interests and interactive in nature, requiring some action or involvement on the part of the user.

The Web is about information and communication. As we make the transition into the electronic world, our behaviors and habits will change to take advantage of more efficient methods of communication and workflow. Individuals and organizations will redefine the extent to which use determines value and what is worth saving.

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against a list of preferred vendors. Approximately 30% of our requests have vendors "self-assigned" in this way. We have perhaps 50 different programs such as these in service throughout the department.

Encouraged by these successes, we constantly look for ways to improve upon the services we provide. In the past few years we have automated many parts of the tedious government document check-in procedure. In particular, a program wherein we scan shipping lists and check the scanned file against our exclusion list, automatically producing **SuDoc** labels as needed, has cut processing time by 75%. The programs are available at: <http://ublib.buffalo.edu/libraries/units/cts/acq/gpo/>. Another project has involved the scanning of certain government documents, providing access to them from a "popular documents" index. Many of the selected documents are pamphlet-sized or one to four page works; providing access to electronic versions not only preserves the content long

It's a brave new world—full of exciting partnerships. Established publishers are faced with reinventing themselves. New companies are introducing innovative applications. The challenge is to make cost-effective use of technology and there are no models showing the way. The successful organization will develop an understanding of how customers use information in communicating with each other and enhance the process.

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after the flimsy paper version has disintegrated or disappeared, it also opens up the world of document information to the library user who may not be aware of their content. See the site at: <http://ublib.buffalo.edu/libraries/units/cts/acq/doctab.html>.

Our mission statement, which we all agreed upon early in 1997, reflects our desire to maintain a healthy work environment, an efficient operation, and to constantly look forward:

To provide the best quality service we can to our patrons by doing it right the first time; To capitalize on our strengths, particularly our ability to get it in and get it out; To communicate effectively; To listen attentively and understand others needs/requests; To understand role, responsibility, and authority; To develop and enjoy mutual respect; To strive to acquire sufficient resources to achieve our objectives; To create a nurturing environment for every individual on our staff; To be aware of the impact of our environment on our mental and physical well-being, and to keep it healthy; To effectively and eagerly respond to our changing circumstances. 

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