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Whither the Book?

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Finally, and briefly,

What's Left for Librarians, for Cybrarians to Do?

One does not have to fast forward history at all to see what is changing. The main question is whether librarians see the implications for what is happening. I am quite optimistic that we do see the future, some of us, and that there is and will be plenty for us to do. However, not all of us see that future and not all are ready to embrace the future.

By way of stimulating thought and debate, let us think forward to a time when virtually everything is in digital form. Let us assume as well that **Google** and the other Internet indexers have continued in their current programs of making the public, non-controlled Web accessible by words and other parameters. Let's assume that publishers and libraries have figured out that making orphan books and works no longer protected by copyright available on the Web is smart. And let's assume also that new books are routinely released as eBooks. What's a librarian to do?

First, I think our professional culture needs to move to on embracing indexing and hyperlinking as it currently embraces cataloging. And simple word indexing is only the beginning. We need to develop and extend taxonomies so that texts in many languages and

from many times can be searched for ideas, not just expressions. We need to work with our colleagues in computer and information sciences to develop better means for hyperlinking, especially working on the implied links. We need as well to work with readers and computer scientists on better means for navigating complex information spaces, simultaneously in the public Web, the shallow pool, and the deeper, more complex ocean of controlled access information spaces. Better visualization tools, more finely working relevance estimators, and federated and/or broadcast searching should be on the list for immediate development. Librarians need to be involved because we are both expert searchers and teachers of information heuristic, not just information literacy but the "methods of discovery and invention" (to paraphrase Polya). In all of this, we must become better at measuring the behaviors of communities of scholars, students, readers, and users, but we must never lose sight of and advocate for the particular needs and experiences of individuals.

As the information puddles coalesce with the information ocean, our expert searching skills will need to develop dramatically. Our younger, novice readers need us now to help them determine which is an authoritative and relevant sources. In the future, we will need to help them even more, perhaps by mechanizing parts of that process, as in the **Amazon** "others have bought" service.

Increasingly we will need to help our readers retrieve digital objects for their own read-

ing, viewing, using, and listening, but as well for inclusion in presentations — for teaching, as part of the scholarly process, or for advocacy. In this particular realm, joining or learning from our colleagues in academic computing is necessary. We become, therefore, adjunct communicators.

In our traditional role as custodians of culture, we need to collect and preserve, albeit using altogether new methods as yet not extensively tested, to preserve not just the objects, but the realization of the objects and the information environment in which they originated, for those who come after us.

Finally, despite the claims of some that everything can be saved and therefore should be saved, there is plenty of evidence that lots of stuff is getting lost or forgotten. This is not a bad thing, provided that someone selects the stuff to be saved. And I think the affirmative expression, selecting to save, is better than selecting for loss by neglect. The new collection development comprehends the more complicated world of creation, publishing, and expression we now live it. It values the traditional culture by culture, community by community, but it recognizes that some cultures and communities are heavily involved in digital ways and means. Above all, those whose profession, whose role in society, it is to account in the long term for culture whatever it is, has been, or will be, librarians and their colleagues in museums must grasp this nettle and continuously reconstruct their roles.

Thanks for your patient attention. 🌲

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by **Milton T. Wolf** (Head, Collection Management, Collection Management Department, University of Central Florida Library, P.O. Box 162666, Orlando, FL 32816-2666; Phone: 407-823-5442) <mtwolf@mail.ucf.edu>

While there is no doubt that the topic of significant concern to most librarians during the last decade has been the cost, management and growth of serial subscriptions, especially in electronic format, the plight of the book, its continuous and gradual decline in academic collections, has largely been a matter of secondary importance. However, this is starting to change and the **Charleston Conference** took note of that by featuring a session on this issue. Several interesting and varied points of view by knowledgeable librarians, publishers, and vendors, moderated by **Milton T. Wolf**, Head of Collection Management (**University of Central Florida**), indicate that, "reports of its death are greatly exaggerated."

Even though the presenters, (**Suzy Szasz Palmer, University of Louisville; Bob Nardini,** Senior Vice President of **YBP; Myrna McCallister,** Dean of Libraries, **Indiana State University; Stephen Rhind-Tutt, Alexander Street Press;** and, **Mary Sauer Games, ProQuest**), who were limited

to no more than five minutes to make their case, took different paths to the problem of the decline of monographs in collections, their insights lead to a much more wholistic overview than might have been expected.

Paradoxically, book production is actually up and doing well, reported **Suzy Palmer**. She cited **R.R. Bowker** (5/04) preliminary figures for 2003 showing a 19% increase. Of course, when you realize that blockbusters on **Harry Potter** and the trials and tribulations of the **Clintons** account for a disproportionate number of sales, you may wonder just how well reading is faring. On the other hand, **Suzy** pointed out that "print runs of scholarly monographs are down, from an average of 1,200 twenty years ago to half that in recent years." She wondered if, "Perhaps it's the monograph, not the book, that's withering?"

Book sales are up, libraries are reporting increased circulation, but apparently no one is reading! Citing "Reading at Risk" (July 8, 2004), a recent survey put out by the **NEA**,

Suzy stated,

Fewer than half (46.7%) of Americans over 18 read literature, with only slightly more of those surveyed (56.6%) having read a book of any kind in the previous year. These figures have been consistently falling in the last twenty years— even among those with a college education or above, for whom the percentage of readers dropped from 82.1% in 1982 to 74.6% in 1992 to 66.7% in 2002.

Libraries, as we all know, have been steadily decreasing the purchase of monographs for years. According to the most recent ARL statistics, serial expenditures as a percentage of total library materials expenditures range from 82.9 (high) to 29.6 (low), with 66.2 the average; and monograph expenditures ranging from 47.2 (high) to 8.33 (low), with 24.5 the average. Along with this, and compounding the problem, is the percentage of the average library's budget

spent on electronic materials, increasing from 3.6% in 1992-93 to 25% in 2002-03. Why have we all done this? There's more going on than the simple sciences versus the humanities. And there's more at stake.

Bob Nardini believes the situation has been deteriorating for so long that "it's hard to sustain a sense of alarm: serials are pushing through the ceiling; monographs are crawling across the carpet, like annoying rug rats the grownups have learned to step over and ignore." He goes on to say,

> No one today sets out in an academic library, as ambitious librarians used to, to make his/her career by being a good "bookman," once a term of praise, but now a word that seems not only sexist but also antique. Those librarians who do remain centered on books often seem marginalized, in fact, even peculiar. Why aren't they online? What about information literacy? What about the digital collection? So much else to do. Don't they know that hardly anyone uses books today? New books are far less featured than they used to be in libraries, and far less visible. Library Websites put the focus elsewhere. New buildings are more likely to showcase the Learning Lab than the book stacks. In BI sessions, it's all about Serials.

But, as **Bob** points out, "Books still remain the focal point of some professional meetings in many academic fields. Books are still the way to get tenure in those fields. Books still line the walls of many faculty offices." In short, books are still the "gold standard" in many fields of endeavor, especially in the Humanities (and some Social Sciences).

Stephen Rhind-Tutt feels that "many serial electronic publications are intended to give quick, capsule, 'short attention span' answers rather than facilitating in-depth study." In making research "convenient" for the user, we may have thrown the baby out with the bath water. Like "pumping iron" in the gym requires perspiration to tone muscles, perhaps the brain requires more extensive exercise than counting serials retrieved by Web servers (my bibliography is bigger than yours!).

Lest you think that **Stephen** is antediluvian, pay close attention to his following argument and you will see that he hasn't thrown out the "serial baby," but is actually a proponent of the "evolved monograph" in order to "balance" present scholarship. He defines four problems that need to be overcome before the monograph can re-establish its rightful place in the cognitive hierarchy.

> First, we must recognize the inherent value of monographs in a journal-obsessed electronic environment. Search engines, interfaces, usage statistics, and business models are heavily oriented to dispense the typical 10-20 pages that constitute an article. Journal databases offer speed of publication, speed of creation and can be consumed quickly, but their brevity and atomicity mitigate against broader understanding of particular topics.
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> For example: key "**Winston Churchill**" into a major journal database and you'll get thousands of articles. The vast majority of these provide simple, encyclopedic overviews or in-depth studies of minutiae. There is no coherence, little context, no attempt to resolve inconsistencies and du-

plication. Contrast this with **John Lukacs'** monograph *FIVE DAYS IN LONDON, MAY 1940* which examines five days in **Churchill's** life in depth and you'll see the difference.

> Secondly, we must recognize a broader context for the monograph. That context needs to include large, interactive scholarly Websites such as *Women and Social Movements in the United States, 1660-2000* where you can discover monographs, like those created and edited by leading historians such **Kathryn Sklar** and **Tom Dublin**. These monographs include a wide range of multi-media materials and associated writing developed specifically to answer monographic questions. Over 150 historians have created some 70 monographs using this model, and more are on the way.
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> Thirdly, scholarly communication must incorporate these advanced monographs into the canon. Those individuals who decide tenure and who are seen as leaders in their discipline must grant full recognition to native Web publications. Like **Moses**, even if they can't go there, they should point to the future and validate it with their perspicacity.
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> And fourthly, and most important, we must evolve a model that makes it profitable to sell one-time content in units costing less than $50. Why is this so key? Because otherwise it will not be economically viable for scholars to publish in that format. We'll be faced with the status quo—namely, lots of "good" Websites that gradually obsolesce.
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> The attributes of the 'new monograph' are several: Like its print predecessor, it "covers exhaustively a small area of a field of learning." Like its print predecessor it is the product of many months and even years of research. But here the similarities stop. Unlike the old monograph it can be read quickly or slowly, as the reader chooses. Unlike the old monograph, it is tightly integrated with existing scholarship. It can be read atomically, but it can also be read sequentially in a number of different ways. And it's here already—only we're not giving it the attention it deserves.

Myrna McCallister, obviously trained in the classics of literature, recognizes that "books are alive and well and playing an important role in our society BUT that their focus and types of uses have modified and will continue to do so." She is not troubled by the paradigm shift, but recognizes that "change in usage is one that is natural and not to be decried, that it is just a part of the evolution that all forms of information have undergone since the beginning of any part of our information societies."

She reminds us that "we've been collecting various data formats since the days of clay tablets, and we've been doing it pretty well. That's another way of saying that libraries are in it for the long haul and we can't afford to be entirely dependent on monographs anymore than we could on handwritten codices or opaque microcards." She argues that libraries did not create the present scholarly model, largely driven by the commodification of STM (and Legal) publications, but that "scholarly communication, like communication and society in general, is becoming more and more market driven or capitalistic in nature."

That doesn't seem all bad to **Mary Sauer-Games** who feels that the present situation has made it possible for a significant increase in the number of monographs, particularly historic ones, available to research scholars, as well as undergraduates. Prior to these electronic databases of extensive holdings of rare and difficult to locate monographs, she says that, "undergraduates would not have had the opportunity to use these works in their study. They could not have had access to these rare books which were held in only a few libraries worldwide and they certainly would not have been 'naturally' inclined to use the microfilm." By providing undergraduates with the opportunity to conduct graduate-level research, she argues that the humanities are expanded beyond previous boundaries, as well as the teaching in these areas of coverage.

> Electronic access to historic monographs is thriving and offers access to more scholars than ever before. Availability of these monographs in electronic format makes the content easier to search and finding new relationships between and within works is what makes new and innovative scholarship and teaching in the humanities and social sciences possible.
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> We need to find some way to incorporate usage of this content into our equations. These new digital expenditures provide some factor for the increase in use of this material that we never would have achieved with the print format. With different measurement tools in place (rather than the print-oriented ones favored by ARL), we might find that despite having fewer funds to spend on monograph materials in the humanities, we have still managed to increase the amount and level of scholarship. Maybe we will find that 'the glass is half full and not half empty.'

One of the realizations of this **Charleston Conversation** (because of the input of the attendees, which is a staple of this annual confabulation) is that at this particular juncture of scholarly communication, where many scientific electronic articles are rich, money-makers for publishers, the monograph, especially the "print monograph," is

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Listen up! This comes from **NFAIS news** which provides a link to **UCLA News** (December 14, 2004) "Physicist Applies Physics to Best-Selling Books". **Didier Sornette**, a UCLA physicist and complex systems theorist, reports in *Physical Review Letters* November 26, on an analysis of 138 best-selling books between 1997 and 2004. "Complex systems can be understood, and the book market is a complex system," says Sornette. Sornette's Website is: *http://www.ess.ucla.edu/faculty/*

sornette/. I think we need to have a paper on this at the next **Charleston Conference**, don't you? *http://newsroom.ucla.edu/page.asp?RelNum=5686*

It was great to catch a glimpse of the bubbling with energy **Sandy Brown** <SLBKIT@aol.com> (the Book House) at the **Charleston Conference** this year. Sandy's small press is down for the count: the distributor went belly up, costs of help were too costly so the press is laying low. But she is still hard at work at the **Book House** filling our orders.

Well, looks like we're out of space, so that's all for now. Happy reading and see you in Boston.

unfortunately an economic failure, and without a new business model, it is headed the way of the Dodo. The monograph we have known and loved is now long in the tooth, but there's a new one, who is a direct descendant, moving into the electronic mainstream. All it needs is recognition, academic recognition, and it may well turn the economic corner to become a self-sustaining member of the academy, too.

As **Eileen Lawrence**, **Alexander Press**, puts it

This new monograph comprises not only the traditional narrative of the old monograph, but also a range of primary and secondary documents—manuscripts with introductions, contextual essays, images, journal articles, speeches, instructional materials, glossaries, links to related Websites, and so forth. It delivers all that the old monograph did, but it takes the reader out of the limits of linear exploration and allows a scholarly exploration previously impossible. It provides a model that makes it profitable for small and targeted scholarly investigations to survive in the marketplace.

It may well be that, just as the dinosaurs were succeeded by those uppity mammals scurrying beneath them, the Monograph may again prevail over that Baby Huey called Serials, but only when economics needs macro-conceptions more than micro-conceptions, synthesis more than analysis, vision more than accretion. Evolution may well see pigs fly! 🌲

Further Reading

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Collection Analysis Using Circulation, ILL, and Collection Data

by **Jennifer Knievel** (University of Colorado at Boulder); **Heather Wicht** (University of Colorado at Boulder); and **Lynn Silipigni Connaway** (OCLC Online Computer Library Center, Research)

Introduction

This study was initiated to compile statistics for collection development decision making at the **University of Colorado at Boulder (CU)**. Some of the factors in decision making that are of current importance at **CU** are remote storage and budget cuts. The combination of these factors has made efficient collection management increasingly important. Like many university libraries, the libraries' shelves have been filled to capacity for some time. In 1998, **CU** began a remote storage project, and today, approximately 425,000 volumes are stored in a shared remote storage facility in Denver.

There also has been much interest from **OCLC Online Computer Library Center, Inc.** members in studies utilizing **WorldCat** holdings data. Such studies currently in progress at the **OCLC Office of Research** include library collection comparisons with gap/overlap analyses, identification of unique or last copy, and the determination of intellectual or audience level derived from type of library holdings and a weighted formula.

CU is a Research I, doctoral-granting institution with 26,400 FTEs. The **CU Libraries** hold approximately 3 million volumes.

We use an Innovative Interfaces integrated library system for circulation and a **CLIO** database to track interlibrary loan (ILL) data. We are in the process of implementing the **OCLC ILLiad** software. It is already being used in ILL lending, and we plan to begin using it in ILL borrowing in early 2005.

The goal of the study was to gather and analyze holdings, circulation, and ILL borrowing data for monographs, and to compare the three data sets by common subject categories. Analyzing and comparing all three data sets makes it possible to get a more accurate picture of the usage of the monographic collection. **John Ochola, Ph.D.**, Collection Development Librarian at **Baylor University**, published a study in *Collection Management* that analyzed and compared monographic holdings, circulation and ILL data.[1] **Ochola's** intent was to use the resulting data to support decision making for the selection of monographs to be placed in remote storage. This study has incorporated some aspects of the methodology of the **Baylor** pilot project.

Scope

This study evaluated books owned by **CU Libraries**, as indicated by **WorldCat** holdings. The holdings, circulation, and ILL borrowing data from the **CU Law Library** were excluded, as the **Law Library** maintains separate integrated library and ILL systems. **CU's WorldCat** holdings were compared to book circulation data and ILL borrowing requests for books from January 1, 1998 through December 31, 2002. Only titles that circulated one or more times were included, as there was no code to identify non-circulating items. The ILL borrowing requests were harvested from the **CLIO** database. Canceled ILL borrowing requests were eliminated when the requested item was owned by the **CU Libraries**. Foreign language monographs, government documents, dissertations and theses, manuscripts, and music were not included in the data.

Approximately 20% of the ILL borrowing requests were for foreign language books. Most of these requests lacked sufficient subject classification data, which would have skewed the results of the study. Since many of these ILL borrowing requests were not filled through **OCLC**, they did not have associated **OCLC** numbers. Obtaining subject data for these ILL borrowing requests from other sources would have been extremely time-consuming; therefore, it was decided that a separate investigation was needed to specifically address these foreign language monograph requests.