

Against the Grain

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Optimizing Library Services — Digital Darwinism, Open Educational Resources (OERs), and the Academic Library

How Libraries Drank the Same Kool-Aid that Destroyed Borders & Blockbuster, and Lived to Tell the Tale

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Column Editors' Note: This column features IGI Global contributor, Ms. Tia Esposito, the author of the chapter, "Exploring Opportunities in Health Science Information Instructional Outreach: A Case Study Highlighting One Academic Library's Experience," in the IGI Global publication *Changing the Scope of Library Instruction in the Digital Age*, edited by Prof. Swati Bhattacharyya (University of California – Riverside, USA) and Prof. K Rama Patnaik (Indian Institute of Management Bangalore, India). — CC & LW

To survive in this age of Digital Darwinism (the era where technology and society are accelerating at a faster pace and businesses need to keep up), businesses must be willing and able to adapt. For the many reasons that companies such as **Borders** and **Blockbuster** chose not to adapt, there are many more examples of how companies that did embrace change were able to be wildly successful in this exciting new age. Throughout my whole career in knowledge management, I have seen giants including **Blockbuster** and **Borders**, businesses that provided many of the same goods and services that libraries do, crumble under the weight of their own inability to adapt in the age of Digital Darwinism. **Netflix**, **Apple Inc.**, **Amazon**, and **Google**, however, are all perfect examples of organizations that offer similar services to libraries that have not only survived but thrived in this new economy. What did they do differently? They adapted.

In libraries we call it "collection development"; in the business world, it is known by a different name, "product development." However, any good librarian who knows her **Shakespeare** will tell you, "What's in a name? That which we call a rose, by any other word would smell as sweet." So, what did libraries, academic libraries do right in terms of product development (collection development) that helped them survive and remain relevant in the age of technology? What must they do now, in this ever-evolving digital economy? In a word: Adapt.

Academic library collections have evolved over the past two decades to meet the needs of our users. Academic libraries have become very creative and innovative with the products and services they offer. Products including **Films on Demand** and **Swank** rivaled **Netflix**. eBooks and journals were provided "relatively"

effortlessly, if the user could be authenticated. Even the most unusual things that supported these new technologies were provided: iPhone chargers, Android chargers, laptops, iPads, VGA (video graphics array) adapters, graphing calculators, digital cameras, 3D printing, and even umbrellas — nothing was off the table as long as the collection development supported our circulation statistics because we all know how vital these statistics are to our survival. But are they as important as meeting the needs of our customers? Academic libraries adapted to the changes they were experiencing, and it worked for the time being, but it does not feel like we are losing ground. Are academic libraries keeping up with the changes that are coming down upon us like a torrent now, or are we lagging current technological models, as we fall victim to Digital Darwinism?

Prof. Leon C. Megginson from **Louisiana State University** once said, "Change is the basic law of nature. But the changes wrought by the passage of time affect individuals and institutions in different ways.

According to **Darwin's Origin of Species**, it is not the most intellectual of the species that survives; it is not the strongest that survives; but the species that survives is the one that is able

best to adapt and adjust to the changing environment in which it finds itself." No one would argue that academic libraries have been very successful at adapting to changes in our digital learning environment in the past, but we need to take much greater strides towards the future, as Digital Darwinism is dramatically affecting consumer behavior and trends in the accessibility of online educational materials.

OERs are all the rage now in academic libraries. Librarians even bear the title now of being an OERs librarian — but what does this really mean? How are we as librarians embracing this newer, more open model of sharing our resources? Are we adapting, or are we holding on too tightly to our traditional model of collection development — opting for ownership over openness?

Over 20 years of experience as a professional librarian has made me a believer in change, and not change for the sake of it, but real change, change that comes as technology and society evolve, and libraries can either adapt

to these changes or cease to exist. Change can be scary. No one that I have ever met has stereotyped librarians as a daring bunch to me, well except for Batgirl. Librarians cling to this persona, as Batgirl is seen as the crazy stereotype of a librarian who dares to defy convention and remain bold in the face of danger. Well, librarians are in danger now of becoming irrelevant to our students, faculty, and our broader communities. For all the many ways we have adapted in the past, our work is not even close to being over. If we fail to continue to adapt, we will face the danger of being obsolete.

"Understanding barriers to full adoption, administration, and acceptance of OERs is paramount to fully supporting its growth and success in education worldwide" (Henderson). Regardless of how many librarians we employ with the title of "Open Educational Resource" Librarians, no matter how many papers we publish in pursuit of publishing or perishing on this topic, no matter how many OERs conferences

we attend, if we fail to do something and fast with regard to providing open resources in the form of textbooks for our students, I fear that our future will fall victim to Digital Darwinism. "Some academic libraries are joining



the OERs movement by creating guides to open repositories. Others are promoting open access textbooks (OATs) and OERs, reviewing them, and even helping to create them" (Okamoto). Collection management in academic libraries have to embrace this OERs model and do this in a big way, sooner rather than later, or there is a strong likelihood that academic libraries will experience a major disruption in the coming years. "The movement toward [OER] is challenging and changing the paradigm of academic libraries... These [OER] projects shift the library's role in education" (Katz).

Perhaps then Batgirl is one stereotype of librarians that we should embrace in our dynamically changing profession. Batgirl is gutsy. She would not be afraid of the technological changes coming. Did you know that Barbara Gordon, also known as Batgirl, has many technological skills, including vast knowledge of computers and electronics, expert skills as a hacker, and graduate training in

continued on page 49

library sciences? She also uses a wide variety of computer electronics and gadgets. The **American Library Association (ALA)** has promoted this image of Batgirl, the librarian, for years now with the tagline, “Librarians are heroes every day!”

Now, more than ever, academic libraries need a hero. We need fearless librarians who are not afraid to stand up to the status quo while utilizing the more traditional ways we have done collection development in the past. Not only do we need to continue building collections, but we need to ensure those collections that we build provide access to content that is of interest to students, which include OERs textbooks. How would the optimization of library services look through the lens of OERs? I am proud to be a librarian at an institution that has embraced this idea of openness in regard to textbooks.

Florida State College Jacksonville (FSCJ) is committed to reducing the cost of course materials for students by offering classes that use free OERs materials that are accessible to all students online, and — more importantly — through the library. **FSCJ** was the recipient of the Achieving the Dream OERs Degree Pathways grant. This grant has made it possible for our students to receive an Associate of Arts degree that does not require purchasing a single textbook. Currently, **FSCJ** is one of only 38 colleges in 13 states to be part of this national project. In the library, as well as online, we provide a sample degree outline, illustrating what a Sample A.A. General Education Academic Degree Plan would look like, with the courses listed that currently offer this OERs textbook option. The library itself also offers a for-credit library instruction OERs course. In short, we are embracing the change.

While no one knows what the future holds, we as academic librarians must continue to adapt to this sea change in technology for the “as-yet unimagined new resources” that are sure to come so that we do not perpetuate the mistakes of the past that our competitors have fallen victim to the saying of, “good enough” is no longer enough. I believe that academic libraries will remain relevant if we continue to adapt to the changes, creating new experiences for our patrons that they have come to expect in this age of Digital Darwinism.

Does anyone know any superheroes out there ready to take on the OERs/textbook cause?

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Column Editor's End Note: For years, **IGI Global** has been very mindful of the OA movement and the challenges libraries and researchers are both facing in research acquisition and OA publishing. Firmly believing that libraries should not have to stop their subscriptions in order to free up money to support OA publication, **IGI Global** has launched their **Open Access Fee Waiver (Offset Model) Initiative**.

When a library subscribes to or perpetually purchases **IGI Global's InfoSci-Books** (4,500+ eBooks) and **InfoSci-Journals** (185+ scholarly journals) databases, **IGI Global** will match the investment with a fund of equal value that will cover the OA article processing charges (APCs) for any of that university's faculty members who submit articles under OA and have them accepted (following peer review) into any of **IGI Global's** scholarly journals (all published under hybrid open access).

To view the details of **IGI Global's OA Fee Waiver (Offset Model) Initiative** or request a free trial of the **InfoSci-Books** or **InfoSci-Journals** databases, visit: www.igi-global.com/e-resources or contact **IGI Global's Database Team** at [<eresources@igi-global.com>](mailto:eresources@igi-global.com). (Additionally, view more information on page 79 of this issue). — CC & LW

Rumors

from page 34

the balconies but **Mary Ann** says she doesn't know where the recording is! Too bad.

Brill intends to appoint **Jasmin Lange** as statutory director as of 16 May 2019. **Jasmin Lange** joined **Brill** in 2010 and serves on the Executive Committee as Chief Publishing Officer since January 2018. **Jasmin** was recently at the **Fiesole Retreat** in Italy and spoke on **Ann Okerson's** panel about “**Publisher Strategies in the Open Era**.” The **Fiesole Retreat** programs and papers are on the **Casalini Libri** website. www.casalini.it/retreat/
www.brill.com

ALPSP has appointed **Megan Ainsworth** to the new role of **Early Career Editor** on the Editorial Board of its journal, **Learned Publishing**. This role has emerged from the journal's **30th birthday celebrations** which highlighted the need to focus on the future of scholarly publishing and on the role of publishers. **Megan** is **Journals Publishing Executive** at **Liverpool University Press**. The appointment of an early career publisher is an important part of mentoring future generations of publishers, an area that **ALPSP** is keen to encourage. **Pippa Smart** is Editor-in-Chief, **Learned Publishing**, the official journal of the **Association of Learned & Professional Society Publishers (ALPSP)**, published in collaboration with the **Society for Scholarly Publishing (SSP)**. www.learned-publishing.org

continued on page 69