Against the Grain

September 2010

Under the Hood-Transition

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Recommended Citation

Under the Hood — Transition

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Soon I will have a new job. From **Stanford's** Electronic Resources and Technology Librarian, I will become the Collection Development Librarian at **Reed College** in Portland, Oregon. As part of leaving **Stanford**, I've been thinking about what my position there has meant for the library. Like a lot of librarians in electronic resources, my job description is vague and meant to encompass all new wrinkles that might come along. The electronic resource marketplace is changing, user expectations are changing, and my job responsibilities have had to constantly evolve to keep up. It's hard to pin down a set of tasks that are consistently the domain of electronic resources librarianship. Instead, as I transition out of the job, I've been thinking about the qualities and experience that I've found to be important.

### Willingness to Engage with Technology

Technology is not the province of e-resource librarians only, but with electronic content becoming an increasing portion of library purchasing and an increasingly important part of student and faculty research, there is more pressure on those staff managing e-resources to find new ways to streamline the acquisition and access to online content. Emerging technology librarians investigate **Twitter** or **Facebook**, but electronic resource librarians need different kinds of technologies. A big journal renewal might mean learning how to manipulate data more efficiently, while the implementation of a link resolver might require basic **Unix** skills or on-the-fly construction of OpenURLs. Whether or not you master these technologies, an e-resource librarian needs to approach them without fear and see technology as a way to solve a problem. It is a means to an end rather than a new toy.

For me, an important part of engaging with technology is keeping tabs on the tools used throughout the university and looking for ways they can be adapted for my use and the use of my department. For example, our Information Technology department developed a webform service for students and faculty. Can we use this service to manage purchase requests? Would it be more efficient than our current process? I need to be willing to try it out, create a form, and ask a few people to test it for me. The same goes for new technologies I hear about at conferences or in the news. I can't be afraid of failure or that any particular tool will be too complicated to figure out. Maybe it won't be the right solution, but it's worth investigating.

Knowledge of or Background in Print Serials

How important can this one be? Our print serials are rapidly going online, so where does a background in print serials really get you? Farther than you would expect, since electronic content delivery has not yet evolved very far from the print models. Understanding how electronic serials will work in your environment starts from an understanding of their print analogues. For example, monographic standing orders are tricky to handle in print and even trickier electronically, but understanding that these series will be paid by the volume and may need individual catalog records per volume is important for ordering and setting up electronic access to this material. Not everyone comes from a serials background, so for those who don't, it's worth making an effort to find out how a library's print serials department processes material.
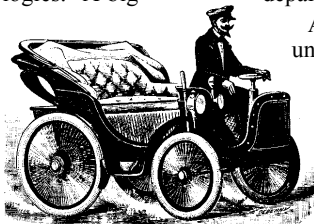
A background in serials can also underscore the value of subscription agents. As agents look for new business models and publishers try to regain direct sales relationships with libraries, librarians need to decide when it makes sense to use a vendor and when it is beneficial to go direct. While the print supply chain has the additional challenge of physical fulfillment of orders, the same questions of invoicing and claiming are present with electronic and print content. Agents can provide many of the same services with electronic serials as with print, and knowledge of the value of those services can help an e-resources librarian choose the best source for purchasing content.

Ability to Build Relationships Inside and Outside the Library

I've found my e-resources position to be largely about relationship building. More than print acquisitions, electronic acquisition depends heavily on relationships inside and outside of the library. The initial licensing and access set-up processes often require lengthy email and phone discussions, as does renewing contracts and trouble-shooting access later on. Solid vendor contacts make the difference between going to a generic email address for help and asking a known contact or even a friend.

Relationships inside the library are equally important. For example, many of the projects I've undertaken in the last few years have relied on the help of our digital library staff. When I started investigating an open-source **ERM**, I needed server space and help upgrading the software. When my team runs into difficult access problems, we turn to one of the Web specialists to check proxy logs and explain obscure browser behavior. These tasks are not part of our colleagues' job descriptions, but they help me because they know me and they know my team. They trust that we ask for assistance only when we truly need it and that we won't take up more of their time than absolutely necessary. Building these relationships has meant I feel confident that I can take on new projects for the benefit of my department, even if I will need help along the way.

Will the skills I mentioned be as useful in my new collection development role? Definitely. Understanding serial publications helps predict their ongoing budget requirements and how they will be accessed by users. New technologies are no longer the domain of electronic resources, but are more and more ubiquitous throughout libraries. And of course, an ability to build strong relationships will be crucial. I will need my vendor contacts in a new way as I manage print and electronic collections together, but even more importantly, I will be a first point of contact for students and faculty at the reference desk and in the classroom. If I can connect with them, I will be better able to help them. Just like electronic resources, collection development in the academic setting is changing rapidly, and I'm looking forward to changing with it. 🐦

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of science that can visualize current trends in science.

The article I have co-written with **Paul Needham** of **Cranfield University** provides an update on **PIRUS2**, the **JISC**-funded project whose aim is to develop a global standard for measuring usage at the individual article level, which can be implemented by repositories as well as publishers.

Peter Shepherd has been Director of **COUNTER** since 2002. In this role he has not only been responsible for the day-to-day management of **COUNTER**, but has also participated in a number of wider industry initiatives to improve the quality and extend the coverage of online usage statistics. 🐦

This collection of articles not only demonstrates the need for a wider range of metrics which are both usage- and citation-based to help us assess the impact of journals and the articles they contain, but it also shows the real progress which has been made in the development of such metrics. 🐦