

Against the Grain

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Managing Our Collections in a Digital Age

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Against the Grain

“Linking Publishers, Vendors and Librarians”

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Managing Our Collections in a Digital Age

by **Roger C. Schonfeld** (Manager of Research, Ithaka S+R; Phone: 212-500-2338) <roger.schonfeld@ithaka.org>

This issue focuses on print collections management in a digital age. While numerous libraries are rethinking print collections as a result of their digital availability, actions at individual libraries aggregate into broad questions about the future need for access to print materials. Even as libraries seek additional flexibility in collections management, this critical concern about access and preservation is faced by all types of libraries, from those that traditionally maintained working collections to those that have made significant investments in preservation.

My objective for this issue is to highlight some key initiatives that collectively provide a broad overview of community directions for print collections management and preservation. Each of the initiatives reviewed is grappling with complexity in an environment of reduced resources for libraries and growing pressure on their print collections in particular. One key common theme is the importance of collaborating across institutions to build sustainable trust networks to ensure that preservation and

access to materials are not threatened during this format transition.

Two pieces provide overviews of projects being developed to collectively manage journal collections. **Emily Stambaugh** of the **University of California** describes WEST, which is constructing a trust model and sustainability plan across multiple consortia and individual libraries to ensure that print materials are accessible and preserved while vastly increasing flexibility at the local level. **Frances Boyle**, project manager of the UK Research Reserve, describes this national-level initiative to build a shared research infrastructure for higher education, including assured preservation and access, in partnership with the **British Library**. The vast differences between the approaches being spearheaded by each, in pursuit of fundamen-

tally the same objective, suggests that choices about the design of trust networks are often contingent on time and place.

But journals are by no means the only content type having their print versions called into question, and these issues face small col-

lege libraries and large research institutions alike. **Bob Kieft**, library director at **Occidental College**, describes innovative approaches to the development and management of monograph collections, including (at least) one year of patron-driven acquisitions as well as a strategic drawdown in holdings in collaboration with neighbors. **Judy Russell**, dean of libraries at the **University of Florida** and former Superintendent of Documents, reviews some of the challenges faced by Regional Federal Depository Libraries as well as opportunities for collaboration that have been identified by **ASERL** member institutions. It is noteworthy that both are looking to regional collaborative trust networks for collections management and preservation.

Finally, my colleague **Ross Housewright** of **Ithaka S+R** describes the challenges that some libraries face in strategic planning around print

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If Rumors Were Horses

Left out last time!!! **Steve Sutton**, the marvelous, is back at **YBP** as **Senior Manager, Digital Content Sales**. You will remember that **Steve** was at **YBP** previously as VP of Library Services from October 2008 to February 2010 when he took a detour to be VP Director of University and Library Sales at **On Demand Books**. I see that **Steve** is registered for the 2010 **Charleston Conference**!

And news of another long-time friend and colleague, the energetic

Carl Teresa! **Carl** is now **General Manager at Wolper Subscription Services**. **Carl** has lots of ex-

perience with our industry. He was general manager of **EBSCO's** Tenafly, NJ, office for 13 plus years (Nov. 1997-Jan. 2010) and Vice President, **Ballen Booksellers** (1975-1997) (22 years!). I remember that **Carl** and **Lenny Schrift** at **Ballen** along with **Gary Herald** at **Ambassador** were the first companies to support *Against the Grain* when we started way back in March 1989! That was the year that **Hurricane Hugo** hit Charleston.

www.wolper.com/

www.ambassadorbooks.com/

Speaking of *Against the Grain* — so many people to talk to, to know, to interview and so little time! I will never get to know you all! In this issue we have great interviews with **Dave Kochalko** (**ORCID Director and Vice**

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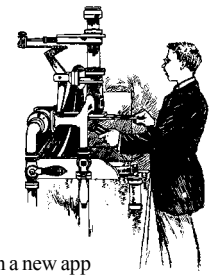
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Is the World Wide Web Dying? And Where Are the Standards for “Apps?”



by **Todd Carpenter** (Managing Director, NISO, One North Charles Street, Suite 1905, Baltimore, MD 21201; Phone: 301-654-2512; Fax: 410-685-5278) <tcarpenter@niso.org> www.niso.org

The print copy of *Wired* magazine's September issue arrived in my mailbox with an eye-catching orange cover proclaiming the death of the Web. The feature article by **Chris Anderson** and **Michael Wolff** (http://www.wired.com/magazine/2010/08/ff_webrip/) points out with a colorful graphic that while we may be spending a great deal of time sharing information over the Internet, we are increasingly not using the World Wide Web as our primary interface. We are entering a world where devices, applications, and services are our entry point to content on the Internet.

I am probably a typical example of the behavior described by **Anderson**. Instead of reading the *New York Times* or *Wall Street Journal* in a browser, I have dedicated applications for those publications. I stream **Netflix** either through an application or via my **Wii**. **iTunes**, **LastFM**, and **Pandora** are my music portals, as well as when I stream many podcasts and radio shows. **Twitter**, **Facebook**, **LinkedIn** and **Skype**, where I carry on a fair amount of my communications, are all applications, not plain vanilla browser interfaces. Most, if not all of these, do have browser-based interfaces that I could use but they lack some of the functionality I have come to expect. Although, **Anderson's** article was pilloried in some tech circles for its misleading use of graphics (<http://www.boingboing.net/2010/08/17/is-the-web-really-de.html>), and overstating known trends (<http://techcrunch.com/2010/08/17/wired-web-dead/>), his article and post highlighted a growing problem with our interactions online, not just for users, but also for content creators, aggregators, and libraries.

Back in the mid to late 1990s, development of online journal platforms was challenged by the need to test out the various browsers (http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/74/Timeline_of_web_browsers.svg) to see how a site would be rendered and to ensure that the site functioned properly however users accessed it. In the early days of Web publishing, browser differences could make a site nearly unreadable on some of them. Testing on different versions of **Netscape**, **Internet Explorer**, **Mosaic**, or **Opera** was a critical component of pre-launch work to ensure that the coding was

appropriate for the rendering. This is less the case now, although some variations remain.

Today, we're stepping back to those days of needing a proprietary software application and perhaps losing the interoperability we've come to take for granted with the Web. **Jonathan Zittrain** (<http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/people/jzittrain>) at the **Harvard Berkman Center for Internet and Society** (<http://cyber.law.harvard.edu>) is one of those watching this trend and who decries the move away from open standards and integrated technology, which he argues drove the success of the Web.

If we are indeed moving to the “Age of the App” where Internet users have to interact with content via some interface that is not a browser, this will have significant implications for publishers. While I am a big fan of publication-specific apps, such as *Slate*, the *NY Times*, the *Wall St Journal*, *Wired* and others, not every publisher — indeed most publishers — are not in a position to create and maintain such an app. They'd also have to modify the app for the **iPad** platform, the **Android** platform, the **Blackberry** platform, various e-readers, etc. Plus there are all the devices that may develop next year or three years from now and all the different device's software upgrades that go on continuously. A figure quoted frequently earlier this year during the **American Association of Publishers/Professional Scholarly Publishing** meeting was that a good custom-built app could cost upwards of \$50,000, not counting the cost of the post-release support and tweaking. A publisher's \$50,000 development investment might have a shelf life of 12-18 months because of upgrades to the platform operating system that require an app upgrade or complete redesign. If building one \$50,000 application is on the verge of being too expensive for your organization, building three or four is simply not an option.

The cost alone would be a big impediment for many smaller publishers. An even more critical problem is that the publisher now has an application that works on selected devices but not on others, resulting in only partial penetration within the community for the publisher. The user is also affected by having to install (and possibly purchase) a different app for

every publication and launch a new app when switching publications. Clicking on links within the publication can launch yet another app (or ironically, a Web browser window). The library community is further challenged by serving diverse communities only some of whom may access a portion of the licensed content.

Operating system changes, platform dependencies, and user demands for increased functionality have been problems since the advent of electronic publishing. But the World Wide Web's success, especially as an information distribution platform, was due to its ability to circumvent most of these issues and that ability was due to the underlying standards infrastructure. The era we seem to be entering is taking us back to those earlier problems, multiplied by a much larger variety of devices to support. In an App world, the only standards are the de facto proprietary platform standards used by each device. Although there is some advocacy for standards, such as EPUB for eBooks, most eBooks are still issued in the proprietary format of each e-reader usually wrapped by some form of DRM, or the EPUB formatted publication is overlaid with the publisher's navigation app. From a user perspective, interoperability is even more critical than ever, because few people have only one device and they need to be able to move their content between their smartphone and their laptop, or their PDA and their organization's file server. This is exactly the kind of interoperability that requires the use of common standards, not proprietary applications.

Smaller publishers will likely have to partner with aggregators to deliver their content, much as they did with pooling resources for Web-based distribution platforms like **HighWire**, **Project Muse**, or **BioOne**. As yet such aggregators have not launched device specific applications. For the moment only larger publishers are venturing into the app space, such as the **American Institute of Physics** with their **iResearch iPhone App** (http://scitation.aip.org/labs/10_15_09_iresearch_iphone_app) released last year or the **Nature Publishing Group** (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/nature-com/id349659422?mt=8>) and **Public Library of Science (PLOS)** (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/plos-medicine/id362137769?mt=8>), each with multiple apps distributed through the **iTunes** store. Highlighting the underlying problem, though, is the fact that all of these applications are for the **Apple iPhone** or **iPad**, not for other platforms. Although **OCLC** has allowed its **WorldCat** data to be served up via third-party applications on a range of platforms, **OCLC** itself has also only developed for the **Apple** suite of products.

And where are libraries in this new app world? With ever-shrinking budgets, libraries can't afford to manage a digital collection with multiple proprietary versions of each content item and all the apps required to run them. If a library chooses (or is forced through budget constraints) to “standardize” on one or a few devices and platforms, they are then limiting the availability of content to what has been developed for those platforms. Just like smaller publishers, libraries will likely need to work with one or more aggregators to ensure access to all the desired content — when or if such aggregators are available at an affordable price. The preservation issues will also become even more complicated than they currently are in the browser-based environment, where libraries are still struggling with how to ensure preservation of content. As if preservation of digital content alone were not difficult enough, there is ample proof of how difficult

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collections given the complexities of campus stakeholder preferences. Sensitivity to user needs and ability to deploy strong rationales for decision-making can help leaders navigate difficult choices.

This *Against the Grain* issue focuses on managing print collections, but the truth is that each of the profiled initiatives is fundamentally about library strategy and services. In an environment of constrained resources, libraries strive to serve user needs with new formats and innovative support roles, find mission alignment with their parent organizations / funding bodies, and avoid deviating from the vital shared value of preservation. Finding the right balance for print collections is imperative to planning a strategy for the library to meet user needs in a changing environment. 🌿

Pelikan's Antidisambiguation from page 14

have at hand, and if our “desktop” and everything we've left there, comes with it — well, that'll be a bunch of steps further toward the kind of environment many have been envisioning for a long time.

So let's all take a look at **Blio**. Regard it not as an app that runs on a **Windows** machine, but recognize it as the next step toward a uniform, multi-platform environment that goes where you go — and that isn't necessarily or automatically run by either of those twin gorillas, **Apple** or **Amazon**.

Google's a pretty big gorilla too. And **Microsoft** — a fair-sized gorilla itself — hasn't died off — not by half.

So I guess we're in for quite a show here. For myself, I'm going to grab some popcorn, a root beer, and enjoy all that emerges. ... 🌿