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I Hear the Train A Comin' -- Train LIVE with Anne Kenney and Kevin Guthrie

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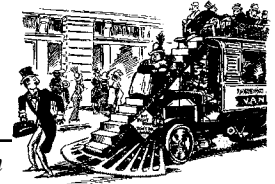
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I Hear the Train A Comin' — Train LIVE with Anne Kenney and Kevin Guthrie



Column Editor: **Greg Tananbaum** (Founder and CEO, Anianet) <greg@anianet.com> www.anianet.com

In November, I again had the distinct pleasure of hosting a live version of this column at the annual **Charleston Conference**. Joining me under the klieg lights on the **Francis Marion** stage were **Anne Kenney** and **Kevin Guthrie**. **Anne** is the University Librarian at **Cornell**, a post to which she was appointed in 2008. She has been at the university since 1987. **Anne** has done pioneering work in archiving and preservation, particularly in developing standards for digitizing library materials. She is a fellow and past president of the **Society of American Archivists**, serves on the **Social Science Research Council's Committee on Libraries and Archives of Cuba**, and is on **ARL's Board of Directors**. **Kevin** is an executive and entrepreneur with expertise in high technology and not-for-profit management. **Kevin** was the founding president of **JSTOR**, in 1995, and **ITHAKA**, in 2004. As *Against the Grain* readers likely know, **ITHAKA** provides three externally facing services: **JSTOR**, **Portico**, the digital preservation service, and **Ithaka S+R**, a strategy and research enterprise focused on helping the scholarly community make a successful and sustainable transition to digital and network technologies. **Kevin** has also started his own software development company and served as a research associate at the **Mellon Foundation**. I was lucky to be joined by these two leaders in our community for a free-wheeling and provocative discussion about the future of scholarly communication.

I first asked both **Anne** and **Kevin** about the biggest challenges the library community would face over the next two to five years. **Anne** indicated that this period would continue to see us redefining what a research library is in a rapidly changing world. By way of example, she cited **Cornell's** materials budget, which has seen spending on e-content rise from 30% in 2004 to 60% today. The organization will need to reorient itself away from physical services and focus on optimizing the delivery of electronic services. This also means supporting

a more global patron base that is not necessarily tethered to a single geographical location. **Kevin** called out the erosion of the traditional structures and roles that define libraries and publishers. Libraries bundle fewer services to patrons. Publishers deliver born-digital media in an environment that is incredibly price-sensitive. Both groups find their conventional intermediating duties between authors and readers in flux. The next few years will be defined, in **Kevin's** view, by how effectively libraries and publishers can find new ways to contribute value to this chain.

I next asked **Anne** what aspect of the vendor-institutional relationship publishers might be misunderstanding. She explained that publishers tend to see libraries as a sales channel. This view diminishes the library's role in mediating content, developing a useful collection, and ensuring wide and enduring access. There is a stronger relationship between the patron and the library that extends beyond just simply fielding order requests. The librarian is not a passive actor in this process, as vendors may sometimes believe.

Flipping the question around, I asked **Kevin** what aspect of the vendor-institutional relationship libraries might be misunderstanding. **Kevin** argued that some librarians enter the profession without an interest in business. This creates a challenge in understanding certain business aspects of library management. How does building scale impact costs, for example? What defines value? How can libraries maintain their viability in difficult financial circumstances? These are largely business issues, and they must be addressed internally before libraries can fully appreciate the vendor perspective with respect to products, pricing, and so forth.

We next discussed a pair of interesting court cases. **ITHAKA** finds itself entangled in the **Aaron Swartz** affair, in which **Mr. Swartz** allegedly tapped directly into the core of **MIT's** network in order to avoid **JSTOR's** security measures and misappropriate nearly five million

articles that are part of the **JSTOR** database. In the second case, three major author groups filed suit against **Cornell** and four other institutions, alleging that the **Hathi Trust** book digitization initiative constitutes copyright infringement. Without digging too deeply into the details of the pending trials, I asked **Kevin** and **Anne** what we should take away from these cases, particularly as pertains to issues of use, compliance, and security. The lesson **Anne** felt we should learn is that libraries need to better understand the myriad issues associated with what is appropriate for digital access to material. Libraries are in the business of respecting agreements, contracts, and rights. Failures in that regard will erode the trust the academic community has for the library. This is a huge asset, and therefore we must step carefully through this thicket of complexities.

Kevin was understandably reticent to delve into the details of the **Swartz** case, given the ongoing criminal proceedings. His general takeaway was that we are a nation of laws, and we are best served by obeying those laws. This includes copyright, terms of use, and privacy. Libraries have consistently been good stewards of their responsibilities in this regard, to their credit. It is a role in which they excel, and they should continue to be a leading voice on campus when it comes to these matters.

Finally, I asked **Kevin** and **Anne** for one game-changer we would soon see within the scholarly communication space. For **Kevin**, it is the electronic book. We do not have broad access to eBooks yet. There is no standardization. Platforms are messy. Rationalization of eBook delivery and access will be a big game-changer. The **Google Books** initiative signaled that it was possible to digitize 15 million books. If and when everything traditionally delivered by the library is available electronically, this will change the way we operate. For **Anne**, it was difficult to pick just one. The outcome of the **Google** settlement is a game changer, as is the development of the **Hathi Trust**. Over 60 institutions and consortia are participating, and with 10 million volumes, it is in the company of the elite of **ALA** libraries. Now we have the ability to search across the content of all those volumes. We are moving towards new forms of reading, where we can mine information in new ways. How do we as a community keep things lightweight and not diminish the role of the individual institution but enhance it? Figuring out this piece of the puzzle will change the game indeed.

As I close this column, I want to thank **Katina Strauch**, **Beth Bernhardt**, **Leah Hinds**, **Anthony Watkinson**, **Toni Nix**, and the rest of the **Charleston Conference** crew for a wonderfully engaging meeting. When the conversation overshadows the amazing food in Charleston, you know you have accomplished something. 🍷

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