Cites & Insights

Crawford at Large

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Volume 5, Number 4: March 2005 ISSN 1534-0937 Walt Crawford

Library Access to Scholarship

The big story in January was "NIH: Moving Forward," a "fairly solid step forward for scholarly access." As of December 2004, it appeared that the National Institutes of Health would move forward with a plan in which investigators doing NIH-funded work would be asked to submit final peer-reviewed copies of accepted articles; the NIH would make them publicly available at PubMed Central after six months. It wasn't complete open access, but it was a step.

Too big a step, apparently. Once again, NIH leads off LIBRARY ACCESS TO SCHOLARSHIP—but with a classic "two steps forward, one step back" situation.

NIH: Less Certainty, Still Progress

Most observers expected NIH to post their new policy in December 2004 or, later, January 11. That date slipped. Meanwhile, AAP's Professional/Scholarly Publishing Division (PSP) took another whack at the NIH proposal in a November 15, 2004 letter from Pat Schroeder to NIH director Elias A. Zerhouni, reprinted in the *Professional Scholarly Publishing Bulletin* 5:3 (Winter 2004). Schroeder notes an October 28 meeting between Zerhouni and "our biomedical journal publishers"—and goes on to urge him "to recognize how diverse medical publishing really is." In boldface, the letter provides this take on NIH's modest proposal for voluntary delayed archiving:

> AAP strongly believes that it is premature for NIH regulations to fix or bias any specific model at this time. More time is needed to see how the many new publishing models being tried evolve in the reader/author marketplace. Government regulation is likely to foster a rigid dissemination system less able to respond to new and enabling technologies.

Schroeder discusses a proposed initiative between PSP and patient advocacy groups "whereby access to original research studies might be provided to patients and their families in an appropriate context"—which raises the question of why *hundreds* of patient advocacy groups backed the NIH proposal. She claims the proposal raises unanswered questions about "the disruption of useful journal business models, the risk of censorship and the integrity of the scientific record"—pretty much the standard anti-OA claims, wholly lacking in evidentiary support. Worse, she issues this bizarre interpretation of the UK fiasco:

> The United Kingdom engaged in such a process and determined that a competitive global publishing marketplace marked by diverse business models and innovation already exists. They concluded that there was no justification to intervene in a way that would support open access over other business models that already disseminate peer-reviewed scientific research.

To put it another way, using reality-based thinking: The findings of the committee that carried out the "deliberate, participatory process" Schroeder calls for were *summarily dismissed* by the UK government.

Inside This Issue

It seems important to PSP that NIH "always link to the final, published articles on the individual publisher's website and not….make articles freely available until after a period of time compatible with the individual publisher's business model, as determined by that publisher." The first clause argues specifically

against PubMed Central as a repository, for reasons that aren't apparent to this reader (who would note that articles on publisher's sites could always be removed from public access if it suits the publisher—or if the publisher goes out of business). The second is, essentially, a plea that NIH *do nothing* to improve access. The letter also includes the mandatory indirect suggestion that any change in the current system will somehow "adversely impact" the peer review system.

Mid-January

One supposed reason for the delay in NIH's policy announcement was that a new Secretary of Health and Human Services, Michael Leavitt, was going through confirmation hearings. *Open Access News* notes a January 21 *Washington Fax* report that Leavitt assured the Sente Finance Committee that he supports the principles behind NIH's policy but "knows very little about the specifics." Senator Wyden (Oregon) commented that NIH was going to "reduce substantially a proposal to make research that the taxpayers have funded available to the country" and urged that the apparent 12-month embargo window in the forthcoming policy be reduced to the original six months—and that it be a requirement, not a request.

Another *Washington Fax* article that day noted the claim of journal publishers that "some journals, particularly those that publish infrequently, might be put out of business." Zerhouni still called the new policy a "breakthrough"—"creating for the first time the precedent and the right for a federal agency to have a venue or pathway for its scientists to publish and give access to the public."

SPARC e-News (December 2004-January 2005) notes a January 18 Washington *Post* report that the NIH policy "has been scaled back…under pressure from scientific publishers, who argued that the plan would eat into their profits and harm the scientific enterprise." It also notes a January 11 letter from the Alliance for Taxpayer Access expressing disappointment in the delayed announcement.

February: Policy and early reactions

On February 3, 2005, NIH issued a press release, a policy implementation statement, and a more extended *Policy on enhancing public access to archived publications resulting from NIH-funded research*, notice NOT-OD-05-022.

The press release notes that the policy is "designed to accelerate the public's access to published articles resulting from NIH-funded research" and says it "calls on scientists to release to the public manuscripts…as soon as possible, and within 12 months of final publication." A bit later, Zerhouni admits that the new policy is voluntary. The release notes that PubMed Central is "a stable archive of peer-reviewed research publications…to ensure the permanent preservation of these vital research findings" and that it secures "a searchable compendium of these research publications that NIH and its awardees can use to manage more efficiently…"

The three-page implementation memo is a lightweight call: "Beginning May 2, 2005, NIH-funded investigators will be asked to submit voluntarily to PubMed Central (PMC) the author's final manuscript upon acceptance for publication…" It defines "author's final manuscript" as "the final version accepted for journal publication…[including] all modifications from the peer review process" and notes that, at the time of voluntary submission, authors "will specify the timing of the posting of their final manuscript for public accessibility… Posting for public accessibility through PMC is strongly encouraged as soon as possible (and within twelve months of the publisher's official date of final publication."

Later, the policy explicitly excludes "book chapters, editorials, reviews, or conference proceedings," and clarifies that it's only asking for publications resulting from currently funded projects. As to versions, "the publisher may choose to furnish PMC with the publisher's final version, which will supersede the author's final version"—and the publisher can agree to a *shorter* embargo than the author chose. The new submission policy fulfills the existing requirement to provide publications as part of progress reports—but NIH still wants hardcopy of "submitted but not yet accepted" manuscripts (which don't go into PMC).

The 14-page Final Policy Statement goes into more detail and includes NIH responses to many of the public comments received. You can find that document at grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-05-022; it's interesting background. Publishers and other "commenters" raised all the objections you'd expect; the NIH has sound answers in every case. One response addresses the OA issue:

> Some commenters believed that the NIH Public Access Policy constitutes an open access model of publishing. The NIH Policy is not a form of publishing; rather, it creates a stable archive of peer-reviewed research publications resulting from NIH-funded research.

Interestingly, although we have PSP proclaiming how much it favors eventual access, "some commenters also noted that the vast majority of journals currently offer no free public access at all, thus arguing that a 6-month waiting time is too aggressive." Six months is certainly much sooner than "never," and for that matter so is a year. There's a lot more here, including the fundamental answer to publishers who assert that "their" copyright is being undermined: To wit, although NIH isn't relying on it, the government-purpose copyright license gives NIH absolute rights to reproduce, publish, or otherwise use copyrighted works resulting from NIH funding "for Federal purposes, as well as to authorize others to do so." Do Federal purposes include seeing to it that Federally-funded research is disseminated to the widest possible audience? Why not?

Technically, *SPARC Open Access Newsletter* 82 (February 2, 2005) came out a day before the policy was published, but Peter Suber had a pretty good idea what that policy would include (since it was pretty much the January 11 policy, just delayed). Suber notes that the NIH is retreating and that "the weakening is unjustified and harmful." He calls the weakening "just the latest in a series of concessions to publishers that take us further and further from the public interest in the free and immediate dissemination of publicly-funded medical research" and that, long as it is, the "12 month figure is an illusion," since deposit is now voluntary. The upside is that the NIH's request appears to be a strong one—and that it *could* result in faster access than the original fixed six-month embargo.

But, Suber notes, "[M]any publishers will demand that authors choose late release or even exercise their option to deny the request and never deposit in PMC at all." Suber criticizes the policy "because it invites publishers who dislike the policy to voice a preference contrary to the NIH's preference and (to that extent) because it creates an untenable, high-risk dilemma for authors." Suber provides seven pages of comments and two more of links to related articles; as usual, you should look at his full commentary.

With the policy out, the Alliance for Taxpayer Access issued a release declaring, "The just-announced policy falls short of their expectations and long-standing recommendations." Key concerns: the policy is entirely voluntary; it lacks any definitive time frame; it puts grantees in "the untenable position of trying to meet the contradictory expectations of their funding agency and their publisher." Rick Johnson of SPARC notes that the policy isn't what they hoped for—but they're eager for it to succeed. Others offer similar comments.

Then there's the DC Principles gang, which issued a release calling the NIH rule "a missed opportunity," decrying the "waste of research dollars," and asserting that NIH "should take advantage of the fact that most not-for-profit publishers currently make all their content…available for free to the public within 12 months." The release claims the public "would be better served if NIH created an enhanced search engine that works like Google to crawl the journals' full text articles and link to the final published articles residing on the journal websites"—asserting, *with no evidence at all*, that this would offer "significantly more assistance to those seeking medical research results than a database of NIH-funded manuscripts can provide." It goes on to claim that the PubMed Central version will be "an unedited version." Naturally, the enormous cost of expanding PubMed Central is mentioned several times but never enumerated—since, at $2 to $4 million out of $38 billion, it's an odd 0.01% sort of enormous burden. That's "costly and duplicative"—and PMC will somehow "harm the scientific societies" and "put authors at risk of inadvertently violating copyright agreements."

I'm immediately struck that "most" is not "all" (some nonprofit publishers do *not* make their content available), that current availability is not assured permanent availability, that nonprofit publishers do not make up the whole of biomedical journal publishing—and that NIH explicitly invites publishers to avoid the "dual version" problem by submitting the final published version.

Peter Suber commented on the release the next day, at *Open access news*. His comment: "To me this shows that the recent concession to publishers—lengthening the permissible delay past six months—did not reduce publisher opposition, and therefore was not worth making." Suber also notes some other reactions. The editor-in-chief of the *Journal of the American Medical Association* said, "I think it's great. This is nothing new for us. If it's important, we make it free to everybody in the world and everything [in *JAMA*] is free after six months. A spokeswoman for the *New England Journal of Medicine* noted, "Any mate-

rial that's six months old or older is available on our Web site to the general public free of charge."

The Public Library of Science issued a release noting that the policy "could, and PLoS believes should, have been stronger in several respects" but that it still sets an important precedent. PLoS "urges all other funding agencies…to adopt the progressive components of the NIH policy, and to accompany them with stronger incentives for compliance and shorter periods of allowable delay." PLoS also urged scientists to seize the opportunity and noted the virtues of open-access publications. The other big OA publisher, BioMed Central, also welcomed the announcement and anticipated "that many other funding bodies worldwide will now follow the example set by NIH." The press release naturally included a mild sales pitch for BMC journals, noting that those who choose to publish in them "are assured that the published version of their paper will be placed in PubMed Central for them, immediately and without any need for additional work from them."

That's where it stands. As Suber and others have noted, now it's a waiting game—to see whether there will be a significant increase in publicly available biomedical literature within the next year or two. NIH-funded research accounts for about 10% of the articles in the 5,000-odd journals indexed by PubMed; that would still be a substantial increase.

Editorial Policy and SOAN

Before proceeding to a few noteworthy items and articles, I should note an ongoing deliberate change in LIBRARY ACCESS TO SCHOLARSHIP. As a rule, I plan *not* to repeat coverage in the *SPARC Open Access Newsletter* unless I feel the need to add my own comments or unless it's an integral part of some subtopic I'm covering. I'm probably not the first to suggest that *SOAN* is effectively the medium of record for OA, but it's true—and in my experience, Peter Suber's clear advocacy does not cause him to cover OA-related issues in a prejudicial or biased manner.

If you care about Open Access, you should be reading SOAN. If you're reading *SOAN*, you don't need a redundant summary from *Cites & Insights*

I'm sure there will be accidental repetitions, and my take on events is frequently different than Peter Suber's. That's hardly surprising. My primary interest is finding ways for libraries to free up enough money to maintain healthy monograph budgets and retain specialized indexes and other services; Peter's primary interest—at *SOAN* at least—is spreading Open Access while fairly and honestly covering the controversies surrounding OA. The two goals may be complementary (more so for gold OA, less for green OA), but they're not identical. Now, on with the items that I found intriguing or important—and that I don't *remember* Peter covering!

Shorter Pieces

In January, I noted the special issue of *Serials Review* on Open Access—and that the articles in that issue are freely available at the moment. As Steve Hitchcock noted on the SPARC Open Access Forum (SOAF), that does *not* mean that *Serials Review* (in full or for this issue) is gold OA. The articles will become unavailable at some point, at least from the publisher. Unless they're archived by authors, this is "sample access," not OA.

In an early January posting on SOAF, George Porter (Caltech) noted some indicators that the cost of scholarly journal publishing might not always be as high as $1,500 or more. Apparently, the cost of *IEEE Electron Device Letters* comes out to $186 per page—and given that the journal prefers brief manuscripts, that averages out to $750 per article. The editors seem proud that they've encouraged "elimination of verbose sections from published materials and consequent improvement in overall quality."

Also in January, Nature Publishing Group changed its self-archiving policy—in a way that might also be two steps forward, one step back. In 2002, NPG went green OA (of a sort), allowing authors to post their papers on their *personal* web sites immediately. The new policy allows and encourages authors to submit their manuscripts to the relevant funding body's archive *and* to their institutional repository—but six months after publication.

HW Wilson showed some explicit support for gold OA by adding 38 OA journals to its Education Full Text database. That's significant if you believe—as I do—that professional abstracting and indexing of journal articles is essential to *effective* access. Quite a few topical indexes already include OA journals, to be sure (I know of at least ten in RLG's Anthropology *Plus*, for example). It's a trend to be applauded.

Malcolm Getz asserts that research libraries *can* save money—perhaps as much as $2.3 million per year—through OA publishing, in "Open-access schol-

arly publishing in economic perspective," *Journal of Library Administration* 42:1 (2005). I haven't seen the (39-page!) article yet and may not have occasion to, but it should be interesting. Presumably the set of assumptions is much different from that used for Cornell's study (see below).

In early February 2005, the Berkeley Electronic Press announced that the University of California's eScholarship Repository has logged its millionth full-text download. The repository includes working papers and monographs as well as peer-reviewed articles. The press release says UC's repository "is believed to have been the first institutional repository" to reach the million-download mark. 98% of readership comes from outside the University of California.

Also in early February, the University of Nottingham and University of Lund announced the Directory of Open Access Repositories (DOAR), a new service to "categorise and list the wide variety of Open Access research archives that have grown up around the world." Lund operates the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ). Given the fractious nature of OA support these days, it's hardly surprising that some OA advocates labeled DOAR redundant, a label denied by DOAJ principals.

By any measure I can think of, open access is making progress: Millions of articles are in harvestable repositories and there are more than a thousand open access journals. It's not setting the world on fire, which may or may not happen, but there's steady, significant progress. Not according to Sir Crispin Davis of Reed Elsevier, however—at least according to a February 18, 2005 story at www.money.telegraph.co.uk. According to this piece by Philip Aldrick, Davis reported the company's full-year results, noting that "The 'open access' threat to the system of researchers subscribing to Reed's scientific journals also appeared to diminish. For the first time in seven years, the publishing method lost market share." Peter Suber finds that statement incomprehensible; so do I. I can't think of *any* plausible measure by which OA is doing worse now than it was a year ago. (There's another terrifying statement in the article if you're an academic library or consortium with Elsevier's hands deep in your pockets: "This year will be a good one as the US education market comes out of its cyclical trough." That's great, of course, if it's true—but it sounds as though Elsevier is primed to take every advantage of improved library fortunes to improve its own.)

SOAN 81 (January 2, 2005) includes Peter Suber's quick review of 2004 in OA. The dozen points cited are all worth reading. He notes that 2004 was the year funders started to at least *consider* mandating OA archiving for the research they fund, that some universities are starting to mandate such archiving, and that a significant number of subscription-based journals "turned green." He's probably right in saying 2004 saw OA move from the periphery to the mainstream—and certainly right that we're starting to see a variety of studies and reports on the economics of OA. Unfortunately, "2004 was also the year in which some publishers chose…to jack up the belligerence."

Suber also posted two excellent notes on his FOS site, each of which prints on a single (double-sided) sheet of paper, each of which should be **printed and saved** by anyone concerned with OA or working with an OA repository. The base URL for both is www.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/. The first, "A very brief introduction to Open Access," is precisely what it says. Some might argue with the last sentence in Suber's description of OA repositories: "The costs of an archive are negligible: some server space and a fraction of the time of a technician." I see nothing to argue with in the description of OA journals, which ends with this inspirational sentence: "There's a lot of room for creativity in finding ways to pay the costs of a peer-reviewed OA journal, and we're far from having exhausted our cleverness and imagination." Append "brief.htm" for this one, which will also point you to Suber's longer overview of OA.

The second, "How to facilitate Google crawling," offers specific pointers (prepared with Google's cooperation) to make it easy for Google to crawl *all* of an OA repository. It's not a long or complicated list—ten bullets with two sub-bullets in one case—and it should be easy to carry out. I love this one: "Browse interfaces should be built as a bushy tree with links to actual articles as the leaves." Append "googlecrawling.htm" for this vital one-sheet document.

Longer Articles

Goodman, David, "Open access: what comes next?" *Learned Publishing* 18:1 (January 2005): 13-23. (A later version, "what comes after 2004?," may be available on the web.)

This article "examines the effects that present decisions about open access (OA) will have over the next ten years." It's similar to Goodman's presentation

at the Charleston Conference, where he attempts to model likely outcomes of various publishing futures. I'm not sure I fully understand the models, or how Goodman arrives at his projections, but the article and charts are decidedly worth reading.

Goodman considers what might happen, both with adoption of OA journals ("gold OA") and with possible mass cancellations of commercial journals—either because of "green OA" (self-archiving) or simply because even the wealthiest libraries can no longer accommodate the pricing policies of the biggest STM publishers. He anticipates either the NIH decision (in its earlier form) or the UK proposal and asserts that the U.S. and UK would "inevitably" adopt whatever was adopted in the other country—and that required OA would become universal in the top publishing nations if it was first adopted by France or Germany.

Some of the economic analysis is particularly interesting, such as Goodman's explanation for the extreme rise in commercial journal prices:

> Publishers' prices have almost always increased faster than library budgets. This is due to positive feedback: publishers' costs increase each year; they know that a comparable price increase will cause a certain number of subscribers to cancel, and therefore they increase the price to cover both. The obvious result is accelerating cancellations in all following years.

As any engineer can tell you, positive feedback is inherently unstable: It leads to breakdown, one way or another. This analysis offers yet another reason why the STM journal system is broken—despite the rosy claims of its largest commercial adherents.

There's a lot to think about in this 11-page paper (including two pages of charts). In every scenario, Goodman believes OA will eventually become nearly ubiquitous—with a 90% rate somewhere between 2008 and 2015 (or later), depending on the scenario.

Davis, Phil, Terry Ehling, Oliver Habicht, Sarah How, John M. Saylor, and Kizer Walker, *Report of the CUL task force on open access publishing*, Cornell University Library, August 9, 2004. 27 pp.

The last two pages of this report have been used repeatedly as evidence that OA doesn't make economic sense for libraries. That's a shame. Those two pages offer an estimate of Cornell costs in a 100% OA journal model (assuming that all "author-pays" costs come out of the library's budget, with no subventions from research funding agencies), concluding that breakeven is at $1,100 per article. That is, if the average cost per article turns out to be less than that, Cornell would save money in an all-OA environment; if it's more, Cornell would spend more. At $1,500 per article, Cornell would spend about $1.5 million more than in the current model.

But that's just the appendix. Change the set of assumptions and the numbers change. The report is **worth reading on its own merit**—and the report is most certainly not an attack on OA journals. From the executive summary: "Open Access publishing should not be regarded as an *ultimate* solution to the science serials crisis, but it can no doubt offer a *pragmatic* solution in specific cases. We should be discussing whether OA publishing is *better* than the current subscription model, and if so, for whom."

Maybe research libraries should support OA publishing even if it does cost more: "There may be overriding ethical arguments for removing barriers to access." It won't much matter what the library believes if the scholars don't support that belief: "Where Open Access does not respond to felt needs on the part of scholars and their disciplines, it is unlikely to gain support of authors."

The report recommends that Cornell University Libraries "Foster and support viable Open Access publishing initiatives that respond to or resonate with real needs of specific scholarly communities"; consider OA strategies and projects based on whether the approach seems likely to be cost effective, meets the needs of user communities, and minimizes detrimental effects; continue environmental scanning regarding OA issues; and establish a standing committee to monitor developments.

Read the report carefully; it's well-written and full of interesting nuggets. Although one OA evangelist seems to deny the existence or possibility of overlay journals (where a journal consists of a table of contents referencing archived papers), this report notes at least three such journals. The report is inclined to take publishers at their word regarding article costs (I'm tempted to call these prices, a quite different animal), but notes the wide range of "costs." One comment on BioMedCentral is a bit snarky, but a little snarkiness improves a task force report. (Page 10, third paragraph, fourth line: You really should read the report!)

There isn't one scholarly publishing community or academic community; there are many. That's not

news, but it sometimes seems to escape observers and participants. This task force understands that basic fact. They get that the so-called "crisis of scholarly communication" is really an STM serials pricing crisis—which *indirectly* creates a crisis in the humanities because libraries don't have enough money left to buy specialized scholarly monographs.

Good stuff, carefully done. The appendix is just that: An appendix representing one set of calculations. Pay more attention to the first 21 pages (before a four-page bibliography).

Bibs & Blather

Even though it's now sponsored, there are still good ways to support *Cites & Insights*. Here are a few suggestions, extracted (and revised) from the FAQ:

- Tell other people about it—if you think they'll find it worthwhile.
- Link to it if you run an appropriate site. Write about it if you have an appropriate forum.
- Does your library include *Cites & Insights* in its catalog? Should it? If you're at a library school, does your library save print copies? Should it?
- Send reports on programs and conferences. See the guidelines at http://cites.boisestate.edu/reporting.htm
- If you want to use part of this, with attribution, in a noncommercial publication or site, **go right ahead**. No permission is needed (see the Creative Commons license). It's nice to let me know so I can give you my mailing address for a copy of the publication. I can even send you a Word copy of the portion you want, if that's helpful.
- If you're a publisher and think I should be reading your magazine, newsletter, or whatever as source material for *Cites & Insights*, send me a free subscription. Send e-mail to wcc [at] notes.rlg.org for an address.
- I still haven't ruled out the possibility of PoD books based on *Cites & Insights* (or expanding other publications). If you're interested, let me know.

Cites & Insights is not going away (barring job or personal disasters). These suggestions can help increase readership (always worthwhile as long as the readers find *C&I* worthwhile), improve the journal, and possibly expand *C&I*-related activities.

One action that's a bit less helpful: Advising others as to how they can avoid that devil PDF by reading Google's HTML version (and *especially* posting that advice as comments on the *C&I Alert* weblog!). I'm delighted that Google crawls *C&I* (and astonished at just how often that happens), and the Googled HTML version is much better quality than it used to be. But reading it on Google has a possibly unintended consequence, at least if lots of people do it: The numbers for unique downloads don't include those readers.

I look at the numbers both as an indication of success and as one way of refining the publication: If I see patterns of readership and content, content may shift. Those patterns won't include invisible readers.

Speaking of Linking and HTML

Some of you know that I've been looking at the possibility of posting *some* articles in HTML, to facilitate inbound linking and expand readership outside the library community (among people who wouldn't "get" *C&I* in general). This consideration has been more complicated than I expected, particularly since I won't—can't—spend the time to do anything fancy.

For now, I'm still considering it. For the first two weeks (or so) after this issue appears, you can go to the "All Contents" page (cites.boisestate.edu/citoc.htm) and to *C&I* 5.3 to see what the most likely HTML form would look like. Comments received by March 11 will be considered as I decide what to do.

Meanwhile, I have upgraded to Adobe Acrobat 7—which should mean that this issue supports text-to-speech (I'll reconvert at least this year's issues), and that you may get an oddly-configured set of bookmarks in the left column: I'm afraid my Word template doesn't match Acrobat's expectations very well. (The upgrade was in order to support text-to-speech. Someday soon, I'll get Word working normally again.)

Form of Address: A Reminder

This issue includes a PERSPECTIVE: THE DANGLING CONVERSATION, part of which mentions Jenny Levine several times. After the first time, I usually refer to her as "Levine." Why?

When I remember, my standard practice is to first-name only people I've met face-to-face. I've forgotten that at times, but I think it's sound practice.

First-naming someone I've never met could be regarded as demeaning.

I don't use "Ms. Levine" because I don't use honorifics for other people any more than I expect them to be used for me. As I've said repeatedly, my father *might* be "Mr. Crawford." I make exceptions for people with doctorates who appear to desire that status to be used whenever possible.

In other cases, I use last names to avoid confusion. For example, I've met both Steven Bell and Steven Cohen; I like and respect them both, but I'll use the last name unless the context is absolutely clear since "Steven" is a trifle ambiguous in this case.)

That's my rule. When I forget it, it's my bad. No disrespect *ever* intended.

Pure Miscellany

Thanks to Bill Drew, I have another alternate email address: waltcrawford@gmail.com. I check it once a day, twice at most. That could change. (That also means I have 50 gmail invitations, if you want one…)

I note with considerable pleasure that my subscription to *Computer Shopper* will expire in June. Enough readers get some use from PC Progress that I'll continue to do it (and may try some other computer magazines), but I definitely won't miss CNet's caricature of what *Computer Shopper* used to be. (No, it's not because the mag discontinued "The Hard Edge"—I found that almost as bizarre as John Dvorak's rants.) Here's an example of *Computer Shopper*'s current status: Advice to someone who's unhappy with the text clarity on their LCD to make sure XP's "text-smoothing box" is *unchecked*. In other words, the advice is to turn off ClearType: "You should only employ this feature on a CRT." Which is truly fascinating, given that ClearType was developed specifically for LCDs. (As it happens, I find that ClearType works nicely on my CRT—to my surprise.)

Perspective

The Dangling Conversation

Many of you know about a multifaceted brouhaha regarding one item in last issue's THE LIBRARY STUFF. I say "many of you" with some hesitancy: I have no idea what proportion of regular *C&I* readers read any or all of the three weblogs and one *LISNews* journal where the whole mess primarily played out, but I believe one of those weblogs, *The Shifted Librarian*, has a significantly larger readership than *Cites & Insights*. I'm not going to revisit the controversy itself. If you missed the whole thing, it's not hard to track down, but why bother?

I am going to use part of the controversy as a springboard. **Warning**: If you're looking for black-and-white simplicity, for a clear statement saying "A is good, B is bad"—or even "Walt loves A and hates B"—then maybe you should skip to the next article.

This essay touches on several tools: lists (Listserv™ is a trademark for one brand of list management software), publications (such as the one you're reading), email, weblogs, RSS, aggregators, wikis, group software (Lotus Notes, Groove and others), and categories of software I haven't seen wholly satisfactory names for, but that include slashcode-type systems such as LISNews and Kuro5hin as well as systems similar to LiveJournal. I would mention "social software," but I believe that term includes all of these tools except publications.

All these tools have real, worthwhile uses. I don't currently participate in wikis or LiveJournal-like systems (call them group journaling systems), but that's happenstance as much as preference. All these tools also have weaknesses, as is true of most everything in life (and *everything* that depends on a computer!).

I automatically raise objections when I read that X is "*the* future of communications" or that Y is "how we *will all* interact" or that Z will wipe out A, or similar claims of ubiquity, inevitability, or monolithic futures. But if you tell me X is worthwhile (where X is any of these tools)—or, for that matter, that you find Y suits *your* preferences better than X—then you won't hear me object.

Sufficiently confused? Good. What I *really* want to talk about is modes of communication, conversation, community, and claims that one mode is somehow superior to all others. I'm afraid it's going to be another long one. Sorry about that. (One weblogger commenting on the 6,000-word WIKIPEDIA AND WORTH [REVISITED] perspective managed to boil it down to "we should all just get a grip." Now *that*'s concise writing. I'm jealous.)

Jenny Levine's Comment—and Disclaimer

Here's a portion of one post from the controversy—with the caveat that I'm using Jenny Levine's com-

ments as a springboard, *not* implying that she holds the "This, not That" attitudes I find questionable. (The home page at *The Shifted Librarian* says "RSS Bigot" in the right-hand column, but I take that as a joke.) **I am not accusing Levine of bias here**; I just find her comment a good place to begin. Here are the passages (from a February 9 post), eliminating portions that don't deal with the issues I want to consider:

> [W]hat really struck me today was the format of Walt's responses. In the past, he's left comments on my posts, and I love him for that. Community is a very cool thing that I never anticipated when I started my blog, and I value every comment I've ever gotten and ever will get, especially thoughtful ones like those Walt tends to leave.
>
> Usually, though, when he has more than just a few sentences to say, he saves his commentary for the next issue of *C&I*. But he didn't do that this time. Instead, he left a couple of comments and then felt the need to *blog* his major response. What he wanted to say was so important that it couldn't wait a month for his normal publication cycle (probably because he felt attacked, which he kind of was, but in the friendly way that Walt and I agree to disagree with each other…) Other than pointers to announcements of new C&I issues, I think Walt gets a lot more of an online community and conversation from his blog and the comments he leaves on other bloggers' sites. I think it's a very different audience for him, one that expects a conversation and is frustrated by the lack of interactivity a PDF provides. I'm not knocking the format or *C&I*, I'm just noting how different a monthly PDF *feels* from blogging.
>
> I know Walt isn't against blogging; instead, I want to use this example to illustrate the essential elements blogs can bring to libraries: conversation, dissemination, and community. We're having a conversation that others are joining in on, we're both disseminating our thoughts easily and efficiently, and we both have communities built up around our writing. Obviously Walt felt the need to make use of that interactivity and immediacy for this one.
>
> Your library's monthly newsletter—it has the same problems as *C&I* in this case. Yes, it may have its place and I'm not saying you should get rid of it, but blogging gives you something very different…

Early response

Here's an excerpt from my comment (after I managed to get it down to the 2,500-character comment limit in four editing passes):

> My LISNews journal post wasn't a major response and had nothing to do with importance—and everything to do with feeling singed, wronged, and angered. And believing most people would only see the attacks, not the commentary they were attacking.
>
> I know "conversation" is one of the claims for why blogs are so wonderful. I even believe it—partly. Except that (a) many blogs don't allow comments—and many that do have character limits, including yours, (b) some blogs make it difficult to comment unless you know the secret handshake, (c) some blogs only display comments after the blog owner has a chance to review the comments, (d) people who read blogs via RSS don't see the comments at all in most cases, and (e) I'm guessing that most blog readers don't bother to click through to comments. It's an unusual sort of conversation, and that *may* be the subject of a future essay in *C&I*.

Along with a generous offer to post a longer response from me on her main page—which I didn't choose to do, because I was already tired of the controversy—Levine responded, in part:

> [While] this is an "unusual" type of conversation, it's more than I get with *C&I*. Certainly, letting others chime in has added value to the discussion, as well. I prefer this to the one-way flow of a monthly PDF, but haven't we already agreed that you should do what works for you and I'll do what works for me?

And I responded, in part:

> Yes, I absolutely agree that (some) weblogs provide better and more immediate feedback mechanisms than *C&I*. You may note that I never have advocated that everybody—or anybody, for that matter—should emulate what I'm doing in *C&I* as The Way to Communicate. I began it as an experiment and it seems to work, for me, for some functions. I doubt that it would work for very many people, and I may find that some functions work better in a more formal blog than my *LISNews* "blog lite."

That's enough from the discussion. The other primary participant in the controversy never did post my comment, or at least hadn't for a week. My charitable interpretation would be that the comment got lost in the infosphere somehow.

Dissemination, Immediacy, Community

Publications, lists, email, weblogs, RSS, aggregators, wikis, group software, threaded bulletin boards, group journaling systems (those latter terms serving as names-of-convenience for slashcode-style systems

and LiveJournal-style systems). If you want to be up with the latest innovations, I'll call podcasting a form of audio publication (but I haven't used it: Is there a "push to talk back" function?).

Each tool supports dissemination. Otherwise, they wouldn't work at all.

I'm going to suggest that immediacy of response is not a direct characteristic of the tool being used. Nothing except common sense stopped me from issuing a new *Cites & Insights* the day after Levine's initial post. It had been a week since the original publication, I had enough material on hand for a 12-page issue, and I've never held fast to a monthly schedule. It would have been stupid and petulant for me to do so, but not impossible. Other publishing methods *are* immediate—radio and television, for example, with newspapers only a few hours behind.

On the other hand, while many lists offer immediate feedback possibilities, many others do not, with moderation requirements imposing delays of an hour to a day or more. Similarly, while some blogs allow immediate comments, others require owner approval or don't allow comments at all. (I don't understand wikis well enough, but assume that they either can be entirely open to contributions or can involve a moderation layer as well.)

So it's really about community and conversation. Or maybe it's really about conversation.

Community

An interesting, focused weblog can build a community or enhance an existing community. That's absolutely true. So can a wiki—for either a self-defining open community or a closed, invitational community. Group software assumes a community of interest, almost always a closed group. Group journaling systems only work well when there's a common nexus of interest, one definition of a community.

I believe *every* tool in the list above can foster and enhance communities. Lists (open or closed) *directly* support communities and are defined by the community they serve. Those communities can be as small and specialized as six people working on a project or as large and open-ended as Web4Lib or LITA-L. Threaded bulletin boards work better in well-defined communities than in vague open-ended communities: LISNews is less prone to flamewars than Kuro5hin, which in turn is less self-destructive than slashdot, to name three examples.

Good publications also build and enhance communities. There's a community of core *Cites & Insights* readers. I'm fairly certain there's a *Library Juice* community. The communities get vaguer as the publications become larger. The nation's largest-circulation periodical certainly serves a community—people over 50—but that's about as vague a community as you can get: It's too diverse to be very significant.

So let's look at conversation. How well does each tool work as a conversational tool?

Conversation

No question: Publications suck when it comes to conversation. A letters column, my occasional FEEDBACK section: Those don't really constitute conversation. Publications aren't interactive (even if they include user-controlled pseudo-interactivity); that's why they're publications.

Group journals

Group journaling systems appear to be *great* for conversation, as long as the group is closed or specialized enough so that it doesn't grow too large. They have all the elements I consider crucial for true conversation:

- The tool does not privilege any voice over any other voice. Only the clarity, meaning, and power of a voice lend it extra weight—excluding, of course, the weight provided by personal awareness. (Knowing *who's* saying something is always important.)
- Everyone can see everyone else's comments immediately and on an equal level.
- The tool encourages informality while maintaining a record.
- The tool discourages anonymity and allows for (but does not require) the use of true names.

I dislike "avatars," screen names and other attempts to separate people within a conversation from their real-world identities. I see the reasons for such devices, and they're better than total anonymity, but I believe they interfere with conversation. You don't really know who you're conversing with—and that, to me, is a significant aspect of conversation.

Lists and group software

Lists can be as effective as group journaling systems; so can group software. A note on *explodedlibrary.info* argues that lists can offer more sense of community than weblogs, because they're more of a shared experience—but only if you're *really* subscribed to a list,

not getting it as a digest. The post goes on to note the magic of spontaneous conversation and how it can shift in unforeseeable ways. The blogger thinks this is more prevalent in lists. "Of course, such spontaneous conversation isn't always a good thing. It is very easy for a [list] conversation to take a distinct turn for the worse. But sometimes these unexpected shifts can be amazing." Earlier, the post notes that one of the most valuable things about a list is also one of the most annoying: "It's not very easy to unsubscribe from hearing a particular person's views." That means listening to people you find disagreeable—but also tends to mean a greater diversity of views.

Steven Cohen blogged about this entry, suggesting that list "banter" isn't spontaneous: "These are thought-out posts, just as in a weblog post." He also agrees that lists encourage listening to people you disagree with and asserts (jokingly, I assume), "I only read blogs from writers whose views I agree with." Then he suggests that "[lists] still have more content that ha[s] no bearing on my opinions at all; probably 85% of it (a semi-arbitrary number)."

To which I say, "That depends on the list." It's quite possible that no list is mostly relevant to Cohen's interests and opinions, but if so that's a little surprising. As for the spontaneity of list postings, that *absolutely* depends on the list and its participants. Many lists (probably most) are small, highly focused, and only open by invitation or because you're part of some organization. I can say with absolute assurance that some such lists support extremely spontaneous comments, can go back and forth almost as rapidly as a conference call, and consist almost entirely of comments relevant to most people on the list.

At the other extreme, some lists are so big and diffuse that they can't survive without moderation and wander into irrelevance. Others, Web4Lib one astonishing example, manage to carry on a series of conversations involving several thousand people with neither moderation nor much in the way of flame wars. Many lists require the use of real-world identifiers. Few lists *favor* "screen names" or avatars and most well behaved lists don't allow for anonymous posts. Those are good attributes, in my opinion.

The disadvantages of lists are that they require some effort to establish and maintain (including hosting in somewhat "non-weblike" ways, although there are exceptions) and, for some people, that lists work via email. (There are also one-way lists; those are just another form of mass email or publication, so have no role in this discussion.)

Email. wikis, threaded bulletin boards

Email itself is great for one-on-one conversation, a little less great for small-group conversation, and not that useful for community building (except as a carrier for lists). Email is the great conversational medium of the internet. Unfortunately, that means it's been damaged by a flood of people who want to butt in on the conversation in ways that wouldn't be possible in the real world. (But I got served an ad when I tried to look at comments on a blog recently, and Boing Boing's RSS feed now inserts text ads among the posts. The flood of unwanted commercial messages creeps into every medium. Have you changed your Huntington Bank security settings yet?)

As regards wikis, I'm going to take a pass. They're clearly worthwhile tools for collaboration and can be ways to define and build a community. I haven't used them enough to know whether they're particularly good tools for conversation. I suspect "it depends" is a good answer.

Threaded bulletin boards are all about conversation—or are they? You've guessed by now that I regard slashdot with a mixture of horror and fascination: If that's a community conversation, call me a hermit. On the other hand, I continue to participate in LISNews, which uses a variant of the same software. These boards can certainly build or assist a community (or disrupt it, depending on how they're run and how they work). However, I'm not sure they are truly conversational tools, at least not in the way that lists can be. Why not?

- The standard paradigm for such a board is story-and-comment, with comments responding to other comments and comments responding to those responses and so on, as many levels deep as is needed. That *automatically* gives greater voice to the person creating a story (and greater power to the editors, those empowered to approve stories).
- In some configurations, you only see the stories unless you specifically ask for the comments. That methodology (used at LISNews) makes the bulletin board a better medium for posting stories, since they're easier to browse through—but it gives even greater advantage to the person originating the story. You have

to go looking for the responses. That's not how conversations work.

- The point-moderation functions typical of these systems may be essential to keep them from being entirely buried in flame wars, spam, and huge doses of irrelevant chatter. But they also create various levels of advantage and disadvantage that may have little to do with the quality of the actual messages. (Metamoderation helps somewhat.)
- While threading works to make individual subtopics more coherent within a busy discussion, it violates the rules of a group conversation. That may be a good thing—but it's not conversation. I habitually view sets of comments in straight chronological order at LISNews, setting a threshold to see *all* comments. To do so at Kuro5hin or slashdot would be madness.
- Threaded bulletin boards *seem* to favor screen names and (in some cases) anonymous posting over real-world identification. Maybe that's just my sense, but that's how it seems to work out. I regard that as a slight disadvantage for effective conversation.

Weblogs and supporting tools

Which brings us back to weblogs—and RSS and aggregators, both tools which (in the "conversation and community" space) serve to support weblogs. (Yes, I know, RSS and aggregators have lots of other functions, but those aren't typically conversational in nature. Do you consider newsfeeds conversational?)

You already know what I'm going to say here, because it's in the second paragraph under "Early response" above. But there's more—although it's all variations on the rest of this essay:

- Every weblog gives a considerably larger voice to the owner(s) of the weblog than to anyone else wishing to "join in the conversation." It's *not* a conversation. It's a statement that may be followed by responses (and responses to those responses), but one person (or a small group) always gets to make the initial statement—and usually the final one as well.
- Almost all weblogs I've seen give an even larger voice to the owner because you have to specifically ask to look at comments. (Note that typically they're called "comments" or "interjections"—not "the rest of the conversation.") I've seen weblogs that incorporate comments into the main body of the post as soon as they're made or approved, but they're rare, at least in the library-related, copyright-related and other weblogs that I follow.
- Only the most "conversational" weblogs support immediate comments, one click away from the post itself, making it easy to enter a comment and to use your real name. *The Shifted Librarian* falls into that category—and even in Levine's case, in order to minimize spam, there's a 2500-character limit to each comment. Given the length of some posts (entirely appropriate to their subject), that fundamentally biases the "conversation": If you need to reply at similar length, you'll have to post several separate comments.
- Some weblogs require two steps to write a comment (true of most Blogger weblogs), discouraging the conversation. Many weblogs don't show you the post while you're writing a comment, making the conversation more cumbersome (although multiple tabs and windows make this a minor problem). Many weblogs want you to have an account with the particular software—and won't let you sign a comment unless you have such an account. (That problem's declining over time.) These all discourage conversation.
- Going one step further, some weblogs won't accept "anonymous" comments (which I applaud, given that I don't care for anonymous conversations)—but, in a few cases, that means they will *only* accept comments from people with accounts for specific software. That's a fairly sizable bar to spontaneous or even well thought out conversation.
- Then there are the real problems: Weblogs that only post comments after they've been approved by the owners—and weblogs that don't support comments at all. In the latter case, "conversation" is a complete misnomer—and in the former case, I'll argue that the conversation is so fundamentally biased that it barely deserves the name.

Just for fun, I looked at the situation on some of the library blogs in my Bloglines list. I only looked at the first 40 alphabetically, skipping a few very stale or wholly atypical blogs (I'm not saying how many are in

the total list). Here's what I found: Sixteen—*40%*—do not accept comments (or comments just don't work). Eleven more require two steps in order to enter a comment. Thirteen (there's overlap with the eleven) favor those with accounts for certain software. Several—my notes are muddy—require a name and an email address; prefer that. None of these 40 shows the comments within the main body of the blog. Since I didn't actually enter comments on all 40, I don't know how many of these have length limits or require owner approval before a comment actually appear. (One of the 18 appears to use slashcode or some variant; comments appear as threaded lists.)

Interactive? Yes, in 60% of the cases. Conversations? In a manner of speaking—but with nowhere near the equity and full conversational power of some other tools.

Which is *not* an argument against weblogs. They're easy to establish and easy to use. They seem to encourage a level of informality that I like. They have a whole infrastructure (RSS, aggregators, "blogrolls," linkbacks, and all those sites like Technorati that play with blogs) that makes them more interesting. I have a "blog lite" at LISNews; you can't get lower overhead than a LISNews journal—and those journals have a range of "conversation-friendliness," from barring comments to allowing them but not showing whether there *are* any, to showing a count. I chose the most conversation-friendly option.

What about RSS and aggregators? To my mind, they typically work *against* the conversational role of conversation-friendly weblogs, and slightly against the community-building role. That's particularly true with full-text feeds, by far the most reader-friendly form. When I follow weblogs via Bloglines, there's no real difference between a weblog and a news site: I'm reading a group of publications. Sure, I *can* click through to the weblog, then click through again to see the comments—but that's two extra steps and negates much of the convenience of weblogs. And if I'm using the aggregator partially to avoid yellow-on-black text and other design abominations, I'm *really* unlikely to click through. (There are exceptions: I've seen feeds that incorporate comments. But they're rare.) On the other hand, feeds and aggregators make it feasible for people to have weblogs who really don't have something to say every day: I track at least five times as many library blogs via Bloglines as I would if I had to visit each site once a day.

That last may be the other reason why, for people who use email fairly steadily (as many of us *need* to do in our jobs), lists make much better conversational tools than blogs. Blogs, either directly or via aggregator, are pull media: I don't see posts until I visit, and then I won't see other comments until I visit again. With blogs, that would never be more than once a day; with an aggregator, it might be twice. Even if it's more often, Bloglines only checks for content once an hour—a limitation that's vital to avoid overloading weblog servers. That makes for a *very* "dangling" conversation. On the other hand, list posts—for unmoderated lists—just show up in email, and the email client I use checks for new mail every ten minutes.

Multiplicity and Preferences

Instead of my old "And, not or" theme, maybe I should quote the name of a weblog run by three OCLC staff: "It's all good." All of these tools can build community. All can—to one degree or another—allow conversation. All can be tailored to improve participation or make it more difficult. At this point, different people have different preferences—not just awareness, but preferences. For some of us, time and mental energy are both too precious to bother picking up a new tool unless and until we're convinced it's better *for us*.

A discussion of library blogs on Web4Lib touched on this point when Bill Drew, who's starting a library blog, asked whether it was possible to have a feed of some sort that would show up in people's email. Michael Sauers seemed shocked by the idea: "Why fall back on e-mail when you've got the perfect solution (RSS feeds) already in place and working?" The fact that users may not be "RSS capable" "gives you the perfect opportunity to teach them. Help them become more technologically [savvy] and at the same time show them that it's not difficult."

Drew responded, "I am looking to get information to them in the way they prefer or are familiar with, not what I might prefer. RSS being considered better than e-mail is a preference not a fact." Kevin Broun at the National Cancer Institute checked his server logs for 2005 through February 8, finding that there were "a few dozen" hits on the library's RSS feeds—and "a couple thousand emails" notifying several hundred clients about content. "Sure, we can do more to educate our users about the feeds—but for the most part, they aren't interested or ready for it yet." Another poster noted that she has an RSS reader

at home—but she still prefers email, as does Bill Drew. Fortunately, there are applications to cross the bridge: Peter Scott mentioned one, RssFwd. (rails.yanime.org/rssfwd/). You can also go the other way: Bloglines makes it plausible to have lists and other email come into your aggregator.

Despite the seeming incongruence, it makes sense for such services to be available—so that people can work they way they prefer. Maybe librarians can and should also do some education on the virtues of the newer tools; that's a separate issue.

After I began this, I tried an experiment related to *Cites & Insights* that accidentally offered another piece of evidence about the relative conversational merits of blogs, RSS, and lists—although I wouldn't put too much weight on the item. I was considering adding HTML versions of some stories to facilitate inbound links (from blogs and elsewhere) and to encourage readership outside the library community, by people who really wouldn't get much out of *C&I* as a whole. I put up some samples (all the stories from *C&I* 5:3) and did three announcements inviting comments, staggered over two days:

- Early Monday, February 15, I posted a notice on the *C&I Updates* blog, which I'm guessing reaches about 180 to 200 people via aggregators (based on the number of Bloglines subscriptions). By the end of the week there were two responses.
- Later that day, I posted a similar entry in my *LISNews* journal—my "blog lite," if you like. Blake Carver estimates that I have around 1,200 readers. By the end of the week, five people had commented on that entry.
- Tuesday evening, I posted a similar entry to the Topica CICAL Alert mailing list, which has 395 subscribers. The entry was significantly less convenient: Unlike the other two posts, it didn't have live links to the *C&I* contents page from which the HTML examples could be viewed. There were 18 responses within 12 hours, 22 or 23 by the end of the week. Note that these pepple didn't even have the ease of list commenting: They had to create *new* emails to me, since CICAL Alert is an announcement-only list that doesn't accept replies.

I'm not sure what that means, except that lists and email are potent means to encourage conversation.

I'll close with comments from Steven Cohen's *Library Stuff* sidenote during the controversy that triggered this PERSPECTIVE. Cohen hates email: he's said so in so many words. ("I hate e-mail.") Here's what he says about the Proper Tools to use when getting library information out into the community. "So, if you want to use e-mail, then fine, use e-mail… And, if you want to have e-mail notifications on your blog, then do it… Just get the content out to the readers as soon as you possibly can after posting to the blog… Use RSS, e-mail, IM, Morse Code, smoke signal, whatever. Just get it out to your patrons." He also says that the controversy itself indicates that RSS is a hot topic, one that librarians can't afford to ignore. I agree fully.

Inconclusion

I know that's not a word. It's also not a mistake. I don't believe this final paragraph really comes to conclusions. (Hmm. Maybe I have a local neologism here: A *lot* of my essays come to inconclusions.) If I wanted to start up a new conversational community on a new topic on my own time, I probably wouldn't start a list—even though I think it's currently the most "conversational" of the tools that don't require special apps (i.e., Groove). I'd probably start a group weblog or, if I understood them better, a group wiki—not because they're better at conversation or community, but because they're more "weblike," which tends to make them lower overhead for new services. But I can't imagine converting an operational list to those other tools. The overhead's already been covered, and the tools work very well. There's room for all these tools—and more that I don't know about yet.

Following Up

When this section appears, it's usually for followups too short to deserve their own separate items—or where I've goofed and noticed the problem.

DualDisc (and SACD and DVD-Audio)

I discussed this new combination DVD and CD in *Cites & Insights* 5:2. Even then, it was clear that the CD side couldn't really be called a CD—it's too thin to meet Red Book criteria. It also has less capacity than a standard CD (60 minutes instead of 80). According to Jon Iverson's "As we see it" in the January 2005 *Stereophile*, it's worse than that. The dual-sided disc is

still slightly thicker than a standard CD, which means it's likely to get stuck in some slot-loading CD players—such as pretty much every automobile CD player and most Apple drives. "Any customer who has to have his car dealer extract a DualDisc from his car system is a customer lost forever."

As if that isn't bad enough, the DualDisc will generate more errors than regular CDs on quite a few players, because the laser will have trouble focusing at the shorter distance. That's one reason the playing time is shorter: They made the pits longer to help.

> Even with the pit fix, a DualDisc CD layer causes the error correction of your player to work overtime while deciphering the slightly fuzzy pits and lands on the disc. The CD layer of a *new* DualDisc is basically equivalent to an unwashed and somewhat slightly dazed regular CD that's *five years old*.

The age shouldn't matter, to be sure—but this does seem like an odd way to create a hot new medium.

The Midwinter essay also discussed the general issue of "CD replacements"—SACD and DVD-Audio—neither of which has exactly set the retail market on fire. Both offer theoretically better audio quality than CD; both *can* offer surround sound. The only way Sony and its partners have managed to sell a significant number of SACDs is to sneak them in as dual-layer discs that people buy as CDs (as noted). DVD-Audio has done so badly that DualDisc probably won't be marketed under that name.

Three related items in the February/March 2005 *Sound & Vision* discuss these issues. Ken Richardson's "Multichannel music in the balance" notes that neither medium is doing very well—and that surround sound seems to go better with video. The piece also reiterates *Sound & Vision*'s role as "unabashed fans of music in surround." A few pages later, David Ranada's "Tech talk" discusses recent production guidelines for music in surround sound—and concludes, "If the hope is to help ensure the survival of pure music in surround, I fear they may be too little, too late." Finally, as Judy Collins would say, it's time to send in the clowns—or at least Ken C. Pohlmann, the fanatic digital-everything cheerleader who manages to cover himself with the usual glory in his "Digital horizons" column. He tells us, "In today's fast-moving world, innovative technology has a shelf life as short as a Krispy Kreme doughnut's" and that SACD (1999) and DVD-Audio (2000) "are getting stale." He offers a bunch of theories as to why this is true (some of which make sense—including their copy protection, perhaps the first time I've seen Pohlmann admit that excessive DRM may *not* be a wonderful thing), and admits that most people just don't *want* super-CD formats. But Pohlmann reveals his true colors in the final sentences: "Both formats are wildly successful at conveying an astonishing music experience. To be honest, the only losers out there are the people still listening in stereo." How do all you losers feel about that comment? My own response can't be printed here…

Republishing and Blogging Ethics

According to *Library Journal*'s web news (February 15), Emerald CEO Keith Howard offered a "qualified mea culpa" in response to the republishing situation—and offered to host a meeting of up to five ARL directors at Emerald's British offices "to examine the company's processes—at Emerald's expense." Howard asserts that Emerald has "taken the necessary steps to address the specific problems identified by [Phil] Davis" and that "our processes of control should match those of any publishing company of standing."

Howard also offered to compensate customers who have "suffered from significant and unambiguous republication" and to "endow research to address issues of significance to the librarian/LIS community" in some manner working with ALA.

Michael Sauer reposted Will Richardson's guidelines for *teachers* blogging at work (the reprint, which links to the original, is at www.tametheweb.com/ttwblog/archives/000937.html). Some fascinating items in the list, noting that it's very much aligned to *work* blogging. For example, "When you write, assume it will be read by the very people you may not want to read it." Three guidelines shouldn't need stating, but almost certainly do:

- "4. Tell the truth. If you can't, don't write."
- "8. …If you decide to blog openly [rather than pseudonymously/anonymously], don't try to hide that fact from peers or supervisors."
- "10. If you find yourself looking over your shoulder, don't blog."

Offtopic Perspective

Family Classics 50 Movie Pack, Part 1

I know the OFFTOPIC PERSPECTIVES are a little silly, and I certainly don't claim to be a film critic. On the other hand, nobody complained about the two last year—even though they detailed a set you probably can't buy—and the issue containing the REST OF THE DOUBLEDOUBLES was the most-downloaded issue of Volume 4. (I doubt that the OFFTOPIC PERSPECTIVE is the reason. I hope the IICA/INDUCE perspective had at least as much to do with it as did the first Wikipedia perspective!)

So I'll keep doing these, half a pack at a time. As previously noted, you *can* buy these Treeline MoviePacks/MegaPacks for somewhere between $24 and $35, from Overstock, Amazon, and elsewhere. This time around, I'm including a plausible dollar value at the end of each rating—what I'd pay for the movie, with a maximum of $4 for one I thoroughly enjoyed (with a good to very good print), since that's about what I think you'd pay for a single public domain DVD with no restoration work. If there's no price, think $0: I wouldn't pay a cent.

Each disc is correctly labeled "Disc n" on the disc itself and incorrectly "Disk 1" on the sleeve. When two timings appear, the first is as shown at IMDB; the second [in square brackets] is the actual DVD timing if it's a minute or more different.

These prints are never entirely flawless, although some come close. I don't think they are ever better than VHS quality. They are all full-screen (4:3 ratio, the same as TV)—but then, so were most movies before 1950 or thereabouts. These are not carefully restored classic movies; they're a whole bunch of unrestored movies for a very low price. Each movie has four scene splits—and Treeline actually gives you images for each scene instead of just numbers—but in most cases, the splits are fairly arbitrary, based on time rather than logic. (There are exceptions, such as the lamentable Three Stooges cluster, where "scene" breaks are actually separate short subjects.)

Disc 1

Till the Clouds Roll By, 1946, Color, Richard Whorf (dir.), June Allyson, Judy Garland, Van Heflin, Lena Horne, Van Johnson, Dinah Shore, Frank Sinatra, Gower Champion, Cyd Charisse, Angela Lansbury. 2:15

> Astonishingly, MGM failed to renew copyright on this biopic of Jerome Kern, so it's in the public domain. The bio part is so-so, but the musical numbers are great and the print nearly flawless. (I was seeing occasional flaws, then realized that they occurred at regular intervals in the upper right hand corner: They're reel-change flags, not flaws.) The picture is good enough that I tried it on our big TV to verify quality, which turns out to be VHS quality: Soft for a DVD, and the Pause key shows the difference, but still remarkable for $0.60. And what a lineup of stars, all singing Jerome Kern's music. $4, easy.

The Medicine Man, 1930, b&w, Scott Pembroke (dir.), Jack Benny. 1:06.

> Mediocre romantic comedy, an early talkie in a badly damaged print. The only excuse for watching this is to see Jack Benny when he was even less than 39.

Life with Father, 1947, color, Michael Curtiz (dir.), William Powell, Irene Dunne, Elizabeth Taylor, Zasu Pitts. 1:58.

> Charming period family comedy based on Clarence Day's own writing about his father, wife, four sons, and complex household. Taylor—two years older than in *National Velvet*, and already a beauty—has a secondary but important part. Well acted. Good print with occasional flecks and, near the end, a vertical streak. $3, reduced for damage.

The Three Stooges Festival, b&w, four short subjects: *Disorder in the Court*, 1936; *The Brideless Groom*, 1947; *Malice in the Palace*, 1949; *Sing a Song of Six Pants*, 1947. 1:06 total, each one 16 to 17 minutes. Larry and Moe in all four; Curly in the first and Shemp in the others.

> Nyuk nyuk nyuk. The prints are so-so, but I guess I've finally outgrown the Stooges. Watching one short a day was tolerable; I can't imagine watching all four at once—or ever wanting to watch any others. (Actually, I never saw more than a few minutes of the Three Stooges at once when I was growing up, which may be why I thought they were funny.)

Disc 2

Jack and the Beanstalk, 1952, color and sepiatone, Jean Yarbrough (dir.), Bud Abbott,Lou Costello, Buddy Baer. 1:10. [1:21]

> I'm not sure why IMDB lists this as 11 minutes *shorter* than the running time on the DVD, but an Argentine release was apparently somewhere in the middle. This was another pleasant surprise. The surround, in sepia, has Abbott and Costello trying to

babysit a rotten kid. The middle, in color, is the book Costello reads to him—or, rather, has the kid read to Costello. It's a vivid retelling with songs added (which don't help), with Costello as Jack and Abbott as the greedy butcher (who also climbs up to the castle). Not a laugh a minute, but well done. The print's good but the sound is a little harsh sometimes. As for the acting, it's fine—except for the Handsome Prince, who—when supposedly courting the Beautiful Princess (both assuming the roles of commoners, both held by the Giant)—seems to be looking over her shoulder either in a mirror or at his boyfriend. All in all, though, pretty good. $3

Let's Get Tough, 1942, b&w, Wallace Fox (dir.), the East Side Kids: Leo Gorcey, Bobby Jordan, Huntz Hall, etc. 1:02. [0:54]

The good news, as you can see from the timings: The print's so damaged that more than 10% of the footage is missing. That's the good news. Otherwise—well, this is a World War II movie, when the only thing wrong with beating up on people of one ethnicity is when they turn out to be of another ethnicity instead (all Asians look alike to these hero/hoodlums, after all). I'd never seen an East Side Kids movie before. I hope never to see one again. (But did, see below.)

The Last Time I Saw Paris, 1954, color, Richard Brooks (dir.), Elizabeth Taylor, Van Johnson, Walter Pidgeon, Donna Reed, Eva Gabor, Roger Moore, Odette. 1:56.

I didn't watch this, because the same movie was one of the early freebies with *InsideDVD*—but it's a very good movie, well worth watching. Skimming through it now, the print is generally very good (and the sound track is good), with some dirt and scratches. A good enough movie to watch through the minor picture flaws. $3

Jane Eyre, 1934, b&w, Christy Cabanne (dir.), Virginia Bruce, Colin Clive. 1:02.

A badly flawed print (lots of problems with the soundtrack and picture) of a badly flawed movie. Short as it is, it seems slow moving and turgid. The book certainly deserves better.

Disc 3

A Star is Born, 1937, color, William A. Wellman (dir.), Janet Gaynor, Fredric March, Adolphe Menjou, Edgar Kennedy, Andy Devine. 1:51.

A naïve country girl goes to Hollywood to break into the movies—and eventually makes it, with the help of the alcoholic big star Norman Maine. They fall in love and marry; her career ascends as his falls apart. A classic "city of glitter" weeper, well acted by Janet Gaynor. Good to very good print (minor damage, rarely obtrusive, no lapses in continuity), and certainly worth watching. $3.50

The Racketeer, 1929, b&w, Howard Higgin (dir.), Carole Lombard, Robert Armstrong, Hedda Hopper. 1:06.

Tough New York mob boss (with a heart of gold) meets impoverished but beautiful and somewhat scandalous woman at a fundraiser, helps her cheat to win money, romances her as she tries to rehabilitate her alcoholic violinist lover. Another weeper, but with a badly damaged print that makes what may be a good picture difficult to watch. $2

The Jungle Book, 1942, color, Zoltan Korda (dir.), Sabu, Rosemary DeCamp, 1:49 [1:29].

The timing discrepancy may be an artifact: IMDB doesn't list this picture, so I had to pick it up from elsewhere on the web—and I don't remember any significant lapses, so there may or may not be 20 missing minutes. This is live action, not Disney animation. The special effects seem entirely natural, the print is generally very good, and the movie is enjoyable. $3

Gulliver's Travels, 1939, color, Willard Bowsky & Orestes Calpini (dir.), animated, singing voices of Jessica Dragonette, Lanny Ross, 1:16.

Perhaps the most interesting thing about this feature animation is the opening screen: Paramount Pictures, not Disney. According to IMDB, it's the first feature-length animation from any studio but Disney; Max Fleischer produced it. Also interesting, and explained in IMDB details: Gulliver looks very human, while the other characters (with the partial exception of the singing prince and princess) look like typical early-animation cartoon people. Gulliver was apparently created by rotoscoping, painting over film of an actual actor. Otherwise—well, it turns the Lilliput episode into a musical with a teeny-tiny bit of social commentary buried by cartoon goofiness. Very good to excellent print. $3

Disc 4

The General, 1927, b&w, silent (with unrelated orchestral score), Clyde Bruckman and Buster Keaton (dir.), Buster Keaton. 1:46.

Since I'd already watched this on the DoubleDouble set, I didn't rewatch it—but this version seems to be from a better-quality print (not flawless, but better), begins with an introductory screen or two (Harvard University Film Foundation is mentioned), and has a classical orchestral score, clearly not written for the movie. It's also a few minutes longer. $2

The Kid, 1921, b&w, silent (with unrelated orchestral score), Charlie Chaplin (dir.), Chaplin, Jackie Coogan. 1:08.

One of the classic "Little Tramp" movies, in a good-quality print. If you like Chaplin in his silent roles, this is a must-see. $3

Long John Silver, 1954, color, Byron Haskin (dir.), Robert Newton, Kit Taylor, Lloyd Berrell. 1:46 [1:43].

Also known as *Long John Silver's Return to Treasure Island*. Generally good print with some missing frames (three minutes' worth, apparently!). A swashbuckling romp with Long John Silver and other pirates saying "Arrh!" and being Proper Pirates. Thoroughly enjoyable. $4

The Scarlet Letter, 1934, b&w, Robert G. Vignola (dir.), Colleen Moore, Hardie Albright, Alan Hale. 1:09.

The print varies from decent to barely watchable—and the same can be said for the movie itself. Slow-moving, somnorific, with a few comedy scenes added that do little to improve things.

Disc 5

The Inspector General, 1949, color, Henry Koster (dir.), Danny Kaye, Walter Slezak, Barbara Bates, Elsa Lanchester, Gene Lockhart, Alan Hale. 1:42

Wonderful, wonderful. Based on the play by Nikolai Gogol, this film is a delight—not only Danny Kaye's character but also the rest of the cast. Very good to excellent print with a few tiny flaws; fine color and sound. Even if the print was damaged, this would be a wonderfully enjoyable movie. $4

The Paleface, 1922, b&w, silent (unrelated orchestral score), Buster Keaton (dir. & star). 0:33 [0:21]

A Buster Keaton short about evil oil magnates, an Indian tribe living on potential oil property, and the poor dupe who saves the day. The print's pretty good—but I can't imagine where the other 12 minutes went! Worth watching, if you don't mind a little political incorrectness—but in this case, there's no question that the Native Americans are the good guys. $2

That Gang of Mine, 1940, b&w, Joseph H. Lewis (dir.), East Side Kids: Leo Gorcey, Bobby Jordan, more. 1:02 [0:59]

Another East Side Kids movie, a lot better than *Let's Get Tough*. Which isn't to say it's great, but it's not cringe-inducing either. I guess you had to be a fan of the series. So-so print; I'd guess the missing three minutes are mostly dropped frames, of which there are quite a few. $1

Son of Monte Cristo, 1940, b&w, Rowland V. Lee (dir.), Louis Hayward, Joan Bennett, George Sanders. 1:42

Pretty good print and a pretty good movie, with a damsel in distress (the beautiful Zona, rightful ruler of Zona), an evil officer (General Gurko Lanen, played with oily verve by George Sanders), and the heroic Count of Monte Cristo (Louis Hayward), son of the other Count, playing foppish banker to cover his tracks. Swordplay, valiant citizens fighting against tyranny, what more could you want? $3

Captain Kidd, 1945, b&w, Rowland V. Lee (dir.), Charles Laughton, Randolph Scott, Barbara Britton, John Carradine. 1:30 [1:29]

Long John Silver may be a pirate with a heart of gold. Captain Kidd's heart (as played with fleshy gusto by Charles Laughton) is pure, double-crossing evil—a real Pirate's Pirate, ready to kill off his own partners even faster than he kills off the good guys. A rousing, good old-fashioned swash-buckler, done with skill by a good cast. The print's generally good but far from perfect; it didn't distract from the swordplay and nearly-foiled heroics of Randolph Scott. $3

Disc 6

The Time of Your Life, 1948, b&w, H.C. Potter (dir.), William Saroyan (play), James Cagney, William Bendix, Broderick Crawford, Ward Bond, Jeanne Cagney, 1:49 [1:40]

I'm not sure where the missing nine minutes went, since the blips from missing frames seem relatively few. Generally very good print but scratchy soundtrack. A "filmed play"—but for a play entirely set in a pub, that works. Incredible cast, strong performances, well worth watching. $3.50.

A Farewell to Arms, 1932, b&w, Frank Borzage (dir.), Helen Hayes, Gary Cooper, Adolphe Menjou, 1:20 [1:18]

Since I watched this in the free movie pack, I didn't watch it again. The movie is first-rate. Fast-forwarding through and stopping occasionally, this print seems to be in very good shape (dark at times), with a relatively noise-free sound track. I can't vouch for that throughout. $3.

The Scarlet Pimpernel, 1934, b&w, Harold Young (dir.), Leslie Howard, Merle Oberon, Raymond Massey, Nigel Bruce, 1:37

"Is he in heaven or is he in hell? That damned elusive Pimpernel!" If Louis Hayward did a good job of playing "foppish banker who's also a heroic fighter" in *Son of Monte Cristo*, Leslie Howard is *magnificent* as a wholly useless British aristocrat—who's also the Scarlet Pimpernel, risking his life to save innocent noble-

folk during the French Revolution. Great story, fine cast, very good print, some noise on the soundtrack but not enough to get in the way. Great stuff. $3.50.

The Black Pirate, 1926, [color], silent with unrelated classical music, Albert Parker (dir.), Douglas Fairbanks, Billie Dove, 1:28 [1:23]

Maybe the other five minutes went to the same place as the color. According to the sleeve blurb, this is a movie of "firsts"—produced and written by the star, Douglas Fairbanks (Senior, but of course that wasn't part of his name), although he doesn't get a writing credit on the film. "It was also one of the first features shot entirely in Technicolor." Apparently that's true, in the early two-strip Technicolor—but time has not been kind to the print used for this version. Oddly enough, it *is* in color: Depending on whether it's outside, inside, at night, or at day, you may get shades of purple, shades of blue, shades of brown, or shades of some other color—but never multiple colors. There's a $25-$30 DVD that contains a restored color version of this movie; the flick itself—"amazing action scenes" with Fairbanks' swordsmanship and all—is good enough to make me *really* want to try the restored version. $2.50

The First Half

That's the first half of the set. By my estimation, this half is worth at least $59 to anyone who enjoys old movies. Sometimes, you'll find the print good enough for its purpose (unless you watch on a big screen, which will tend to magnify the flaws). Many times, the movie shines through the flawed print. In a few cases—*The Black Pirate* most of all—the print may make you hunger for a better-quality version. All in all, a great bargain (even if the other six discs weren't there), and I'm picking up an interesting random education in earlier cinema.

Ebooks, Etext and PoD

This may be the final EBOOKS, ETEXT AND POD section—at least as a running feature. It hasn't been "running" that often lately anyway. After six roundups in 2001 and another six in 2002, there were two in 2003 and two more last year, the latest one last July. With an eight-month gap, I don't have much on hand.

There's more material out there that I don't feel compelled to note or comment on. The various library-market ebook and etext services send out press releases. The Open eBook Forum continues to trumpet record ebook sales and release best-seller lists, and once in a while a mainstream press outlet falls for the "fastest-growing sector of publishing" line, where neither growing *numbers* of sales nor *dollars* of sales matter, only *percentage*. (Sarah Glazer used that "fastest-growing" claim in a December 5, 2004 essay in the New York *Times Sunday Book Review*—and I find it interesting that the latest figures she quoted were *still* the Q1 2004 figures released by OeBF on June 4, 2004.) Of course, if there's ever a year in which the quarter's ebook sales do *not* set a new record, the still-tiny field is in truly serious trouble.

As of 2004, the world ebook market may have reached nearly one-tenth of one percent of the size of the U.S. print book market. It's a start—but even the segments of print books that I believe *should* be ripe for ebook replacement (e.g., K12 and higher education textbooks, some reference works) represent a U.S. market at least 100 times as large.

Those sales figures also bother me because OeBF seems reluctant to define "ebook" carefully. Is a short story from Fictionwise counted as an ebook? I suspect so. Are PoD books counted as ebooks? I suspect not. My guess (and it's only a guess) is that PoD books already represent a larger market, one that's wholly integrated with other print book sales. The confusion shouldn't be necessary. Ebooks may still be a tiny marketplace, but it's a large enough marketplace for rigorous definitions. I don't believe bookstores count magazine sales as book sales (magazines have a *larger* revenue stream than books, but it's mostly ad revenue). I don't believe OeBF should count anything as an ebook unless it's long enough so that a print version would be called a book rather than a pamphlet—which usually means 48 pages, I believe, with certain exceptions for illustrated children's books.

I'm thinking of dropping this section for several other reasons besides continued frustration with OeBF's numbers and claims. The old disputes just keep going. Some folks really, truly want dedicated ebook readers—but not enough of them to make a legitimate market, at least not in the U.S. Most people interested in reading ebooks want to use etext on portable devices, a process made more difficult by the range of DRM issues. Already, despite relatively low resolution, a tablet computer makes a plausible full-page reading device for those who want to read that way—while at the other extreme, I shudder to hear some people say they're happily reading ebooks *on*

their cell phones. I wonder about contextual issues when you're only seeing 100 to 200 words at a time (on a PDA) or even 300 to 400 words (on a notebook or tablet). But what about seeing 10 to 20 words at a time? Can you really absorb a book that way? Will writers and publishers start catering to people with truly short attention spans? (I've heard about one-minute "TV shows" to be viewed on low-rez cell phone screens; maybe we'll have 500-word "ebooks" with 20-word paragraphs for the same market.)

I'm not making this up. That *Times* story includes this: "Fans of cellphone reading tell me they quickly forget about the size of the screen once they get absorbed in a good plot…" And here's a tidbit from a manager: ebooks on a PC give you "the ability to appear like you're working when in fact you are not," and this guy has read "hundreds of science fiction and history books this way." I'm sure his employer would be delighted to read that.

I printed a posting from CanalPDA.com, translated from Spanish into English on January 25, 2005. It's titled "Why you should read e-books…and why you won't." The subhead is more direct: "Four reasons for electronic books to succeed, and four more reasons why they never will." The story lists as benefits convenience, compactness, discreetness (all ebooks look the same…), and being "more complete" (that is, sometimes having added material). The drawbacks: They're expensive, they're almost all in English; there aren't many of them; and they're "too personal"—the DRM drawback. I would say that offering those as reasons ebooks "never will" succeed is almost as ridiculous as calling the death of print books "inevitable" (it's ridiculous now, but it didn't seem that way 12 years ago). That may be all the discussion the little piece deserves.

Substantial Articles

Litzer, Don, and Andy Barnett, "Local history in e-books and on the web: one library's experience as example and model," *Reference & User Services Quarterly* 43:3 (Spring 2004): 248-257.

I sort of miss the old *RQ* with its claimed meaningless title, but it's been *Reference & User Services Quarterly* for seven years now; whatever the name, it's the refereed scholarly journal of the Reference and User Services Association (RUSA) of ALA. This article is refereed—it was originally submitted March 3, 2003; accepted for publication October 30, 2003; and actually published a few months later. It also has the characteristics of a refereed scholarly article, for good and for bad, including a justification for what could be called a "how we did it good" study.

In a way, it's too bad that this form of publication almost requires the 2.5 pages of justification, methodology, and assumptions: the "scholarly apparatus." When you get to "The evolution of one library's 'local history on-line'" on page 250, you get to the heart of the matter: A description of an innovative low-budget project to make a library's special local history holdings *usable*, which in this case means digitizing them—and a carefully-done study of actual use of that local history collection (at the McMillan Memorial Library in Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin). It's a dynamite story, really about etext and the library as digital publisher more than it is about ebooks. **Highly recommended** both as a careful study and as an example and model for what many more libraries can, should, and will be doing now and in the future. Here are the first paragraph and last sentence of the closing half-page "Implications and conclusion" section:

> If the use statistics provided in this study are close to representative, they indicate strongly that, as a public service, the use of digitized local history made available by a small to medium-sized public library on the Web is significant and worthy of the investment made in it. Whether a library digitizes in-house or outsources; whether it digitizes its own materials or accepts donations of digitized documents, the demand exists, waiting to be satisfied, for digitized local history.
>
> …Digitization of local materials is not merely a high-tech information transfer, but another way in which libraries can unify their communities by reminding them of the history and legacy they share.

Cox, John, "E-books: challenges and opportunities," *D-Lib Magazine* 10:10 (October 2004), 17 pp. www.dlib.org/dlib/october04/cox/10cox.html

Cox is deputy librarian at the National University of Ireland, Galway. His report describes "[t]he experience of a group of Irish university libraries" offering a Safari Tech Books Online collection. The experience "shows that, with the right combination of product and subjects, e-books can thrive among students and faculty, while librarians can create more dynamic, relevant and flexible collections than for print."

I should note that, while I had already printed off Cox's article for future comment, he's also one of the

alert *Cites & Insights* readers who noted that I used the wrong URL for the last issue in the Topica announcement—and, along with pointing that out, mentioned the article and attached a portion of the overall project report. That portion includes this paragraph:

> By way of a benchmark from outside Ireland it was interesting to read a discussion of *Safari* use at York University in Canada in the August 2004 issue of Walt Crawford's *Cites & Insights* newsletter [4:10]… York's subscription comprised 150 titles, attracting 3157 sessions and 29,511 hits in the period from 1 September 2003 to 31 May 2004. The NUI Galway subscription of 64 titles (54 to mid-January) realised 1578 sessions and 11,307 hits as shown in the same period. This level of use was closely aligned to that at York, allowing for the lower number of titles in the Galway subscription. Crawford, who has tended to be somewhat sceptical regarding e-books, is impressed with York's experience and with *Safari*, noting that 3000 hits from 150 books is "…success by any measure I'd care to use….If you're looking for the 'but,' it's not coming. Safari's model makes sense for that kind of book and these massive, rapidly changing manuals make sense for most readers in e-book form."

I would mildly object that I've never been skeptical of the potential for etext and ebooks in areas where they simply work better than print books—and needing to look at three to 15 pages of a massive software book or manual is *precisely* one of (several) such areas.

But now I've given away the conclusion and my opinion, haven't I? This case study covers a group of Irish academic libraries that looked at the whole ebook marketplace, saw the range of possibilities and problems, and recommended a one-year trial "to focus on business and computing, two closely linked areas with strong teaching programmes at all seven universities." Safari Tech Books Online was the unanimous choice for the trial. The article carefully describes the process, the Safari operation, and how it all went.

Safari is very much a pseudobook service, oriented to those wanting just a few pages. Each access only delivers the equivalent of three print pages (after searching, which can be within a title or across the collection). You can't buy the titles, only a subscription for a term of access. At NUI Galway, there was a three-user limit—and that meant three users for the *collection*, not for a given book. On average, users spent less than five minutes in a session—and all of this makes perfect sense for the "I just need a few paragraphs" mode of etext/ebook use. I don't take issue with Cox's comment that, for software-related textbooks, "content may be viewed as disposable after a certain period." Many "computer books" are certainly written as disposable products; it's hard to argue for their lasting significance (sez I, who also doesn't argue for *C&I*'s lasting significance).

Highly recommended. It's a readable article and up to D-Lib's high standards. Cox goes through usage and related survey results in some detail. Yes, many users commented on eyestrain, which was "the most predictable finding in the survey." Yes, users came to see the collection as "a collective reference resource" more than a bunch of books; that's as it should be in this case. Most of those surveyed—83.5%—showed "emphatic support" for the need to use printed books in addition to Safari.

From the conclusion: "Where content matches need, e-books can support the academic mission effectively, saving time and adding value as a collective online reference resource rather than a set of individual titles." That should be true; this is another case study that demonstrates that it is true.

Garrod, Penny, and Jane Weller, "Ebooks in UK public libraries: where we are now and the way ahead," UKOLN Issue Paper 2, July 2004. www.ukoln.ac.uk/public/nsptg/e-books/

This heavily footnoted 14-page paper offers a good overview of the ebook scene in the UK, with a balanced discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of ebooks. It's interesting to see here, as in most recent articles, the shift from '90s discussions of when and how ebooks will drive out print book; this time, the authors cite Rod Bristow of Pearson Education UK arguing "that this is unlikely to happen, quoting the history of media in general as evidence of integration rather than outright replacement." Garrod and Weller note the ongoing confusion between ebook as carrier and ebook as content, noting that in a 2002 survey on UK public library use of ebooks, "of the 13 respondents who claimed to provide ebooks, 12 were referring to CD-ROM. Only one…actually lent dedicated ebook devices…preloaded with a range of ebook titles." The authors claim, I believe correctly, that the term "ebook" increasingly tends to mean content rather than platform.

There's one stumbling block here, toward the end of the "What is an ebook" section: "Implementing ebooks is a complicated business, and publishers are anxious to protect their profits and have taken steps

to ensure that ebooks do not suffer the same fate as the music industry during the 'Napster' episode." It's unfortunate that the authors simply accept that the "music industry" suffered some horrid fate because of Napster and its ilk; the evidence is just not that clear-cut. The paragraph goes on to discuss the problems caused by DRM; apparently the UK has a law very like DMCA.

I also found it a little odd that the authors regard library-owned PDAs, preloaded with ebook content, as "less of a financial risk to libraries than dedicated ebook readers." iPAQs and Pocket PCs cost much more than dedicated ebook readers—but they're a lot more likely to stay in production. They go on to say, "Smartphones may be the technology of choice for future generations…" which could be true, but is also a little disturbing in its implications for coherent text longer than 50 or 60 words.

Those are quibbles. Particularly for UK readers, this paper offers an excellent survey of what's available (the various ebook services), current problems and advantages, and some of the grant-funded projects actually in place. **Recommended** as a good survey discussion.

Littman, Justin, and Lynn Silipigni Connaway, "A circulation analysis of print books and e-books in an academic research library," *Library Resources & Technical Services* 48:4 (October 2004). Read as a downloaded preprint; pagination not available.

At the time this article was written, both authors worked in OCLC's netLibrary division—and the analysis concerns a netLibrary collection at Duke University. A yellow flag for possible bias may automatically go up; in this case, I don't believe that's a problem. Indeed, part of the scholarly apparatus that takes up several pages of this 22-page article (probably closer to 11 pages in print: the preprint is double-spaced) is a thorough analysis of previous research comparing ebook and print book usage.

It's a tough comparison to make. As the authors note, most studies (including this one) fail to consider in-library use of print books, thus inherently undercounting print usage (it's *impossible* to use an ebook without that use being counted)—and in some academic libraries, studies have shown more in-library reshelvings than actual circulation, suggesting that the undercount may be 50% or more. Additionally, an ebook "access" is typically only a few pages, particularly with services such as netLibrary; the equivalent of a single print book circulation may involve several ebook accesses.

For this study, the researchers decided to avoid some comparison problems by ignoring—well, *almost* ignoring—the *number* of circulations or access per item and considering instead the percentage of items that were accessed or circulated. That helps—but the earlier notes identify a problem that continues with this study: Print books used in-house but not circulated (a type of use that closely resembles typical short-term ebook use) are counted as "unused," while their ebook equivalents are counted as accessed. On the other hand, this study does precisely match ebooks and print equivalents, discarding items only available in one format and looking at just under 8,000 titles in all.

The results are interesting. Of all the books available in both forms, 39% were used in both forms; 34% were used only in ebook form; and 27% were used only in print form. (Just below that chart is the single case in which the authors couldn't help but note that access per ebook outnumbered circulations per print title—but if in-house use of print books is equal to circulation at Duke, a number that isn't known, then "outnumbered" runs the other way.)

There's a lot of other data here, clearly and fairly presented. **Recommended** as a careful comparative case study.

Masthead

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