

# Technicalities™

Information Forum for the Technical Services Professional

## Inordinate Maps of Knowledge from the Bibliographers' Guild.....>

### The Universal User

By Gregory Leazer



Gregory Leazer

Welcome to the second installment of “Inordinate Maps of Knowledge from the Bibliographers’ Guild,” in which we consider issues of knowledge organization and bibliographic control, mixed with equal parts of my undergraduate philosophy degree and way too much time spent on popular culture.

The first column was part academic lecture and part sermon, which is pretty sad because I was searching for my inner Lester Bangs. What I really know is that it did not result in a front page article. We might need to tinker with the formula a bit—I am jealous of you, Sheila Intner.

John Stuart Mill, writing in 1861, defined “the Greatest Happiness Principle” as the one that judges “actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness.”<sup>1</sup> Correct moral action is the one that results in the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people, and thus is labeled a “consequentialist” ethics. Holding aside the case where one person is

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## Dollars and Sense.....>

### Fiction Becomes Reality

By Sheila S. Intner



Sheila S. Intner

I recently read an article in an Israeli online newspaper titled “Startup Unveils 3D-printed Juicy Vegan Steaks.”<sup>1</sup> In it, author Shoshanna Solomon describes how an Israeli company called Redefine Meat claims to have “created the first plant-based 3D-printed kosher and pareve [that is, neutral with regard to Jewish dietary laws] steak with the texture, taste and look of the real thing.” Shades of Star Trek’s replicators! After shuddering a little at the thought of vegan steaks

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*From the Editor's Desk.....*

**Genealogical Research: A Problem of Authority Control**

*By Peggy Johnson*



**Peggy Johnson**

**L**ike many people with extra time, I have fallen down the rabbit hole of genealogical research. My mother and father began researching their families in the early 1960s. At that time, one traveled to locations to search records or could hire a professional researcher to dig deeper and perhaps translate records located in Europe. My mother found a 50-some page typescript that explored her mother's family starting with ancestors born in 1806 and 1812 in Denmark. It was assembled in 1962. Not surprising, research options have changed significantly since the 1960s because so much has been digitized in the United States and several European countries. In addition, numerous websites assemble information and allow users to create their own family trees. My exploration has identified numerous errors in the 1962 typescript.

As I have progressed with my research, I have come to lament the absence of what catalogers call authority control. The Library of Congress explains that authority records contain the standardized forms of names.<sup>1</sup> They consist of three basic components:

- **Heading:** The standardized "authoritative" form of a name and, when available, dates
- **Cross references:** References that direct a user from variant forms

of a name to the authoritative form.

- **Notes:** Notes that contain general information about standardized headings or more specialized information, such as citations for a consulted source in which information is either found or not found about a heading.

Each genealogy website has its own software, with designated fields for recording data. The information entered by website contributors is added to a database, which is indexed to produce results when searched and to generate assorted reports. Some designated fields are searchable; others are not. The degree of sophistication varies from software to software. I have not been able to determine if the notes that contributors are encouraged to add are tagged (in cataloger terms) in a manner that makes them consistently searchable or retrievable. Some sites have the option of importing a family tree from

another genealogy website. Successful transfer relies on consistent data stored in designated fields. If the exporting software has more designated fields than the importing software, data will be lost.

GEDCOM (Genealogical Data Communication), developed by the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints, is the de facto standard for sharing data between genealogy systems—"It is hierarchical and link based, much like HTML, but it encodes family structure (which is a general graph) outside this structural hierarchy."<sup>2</sup> A GEDCOM file is plain text (usually either UTF-8 or ASCII) containing genealogical information about individuals, and metadata linking these records together.<sup>3</sup>

GEDCOM uses a lineage-linked data model. This data model is based on the nuclear family and the individual. This contrasts with evidence-based models, where data is structured to reflect the supporting evidence. In the GEDCOM lineage-linked data model, all data is structured to reflect the believed reality, that is, actual (or hypothesized) nuclear families and individuals.<sup>4</sup>

The GEDCOM specification is intentionally flexible to support many ways of encoding data, particularly in

the area of sources. It is not technically a standard because it leaves much to the website that is using it. Naturally, this flexibility has led to a great deal of ambiguity, and has produced the side effect that some genealogy programs that import GEDCOM do not import all of the data from a file.

Each website offers its own "authoritative" form of a name—authoritative to that website only. Granted, many if not most websites supplement the information entered by users with separate external record sets of births, deaths, immigration, and military service, and often census data. Assuming the person accurately entered a family name in a search query or family tree, it can be matched against a variety of sources. And, of course, many genealogical websites will match DNA. The central problem for searchers is, of course, inability to match names.

Some resources address standardization, but the intent is to help genealogists be consistent in recording information for their own use. See, for example, Slawson's *Getting It Right, The Definitive Guide to Recording Family History Accurately*.<sup>5</sup> Phelps offers an abbreviated "Getting It Right: Data Entry Standards for Genealogists."<sup>6</sup> What I find interesting is that, despite her use of the phrase "data entry standards" in the title, she explains that what she offers is a style guide for entering consistent data.

## Name Vagaries

I will share a few of my experiences, both successes and frustrations. It is useful to start with what one knows. For example, I know a great deal about my father: birth date, place of birth, names of his parents, military service record, death dates, etc. I started by searching his name with pertinent pieces of information in several of the genealogy websites. My intent was to then go backward in time to see how far I could go tracing his relatives.

One major challenge I face is that all my grandparents or their parents were born in Norway, Sweden, or Denmark. Genealogists will know the names of immigrants are hard to trace because of naming conventions in their country of origin and changes that were made at the time of arrival in the United States. For example, my Swedish great grandfather had the last name Johansson in Sweden (his father was Johannes Anderson) and he changed his last name to Sundgren when he got to the United States. Johansson reflects the Scandinavian practice of sons adding "son" or "sen" to the father's first name and daughters adding dotter or datter. His son, my grandfather, was born in the United States and, as an adult, changed his name from Sundgren to Johnson. Go figure. Maybe he wanted a more American-sounding name and opted for an

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## From the Editor's Desk.....

### Genealogical Research: A Problem of Authority Control

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Americanized version of Johansson.

My father was Odell Hoiekvam Johnson; his middle name comes from a farm in Norway where his Norwegian mother's family originated. I was aware that Hoiekvam is spelled variously in Norway—Høyekvam, Høyekvâm, and Hoijekvam among others. Imagine my surprise to find entries for my father in the My Heritage website with Hofkvaun as his middle name. Both entries had been added since 2010 and one may perpetuate the error in the other. I contacted both people who had created the family trees that included my father, and asked for corrections. My point here is that errors can creep into records at any point.

My maternal great grandfather was Jens Nielson—he immigrated from the east coast of Jutland, Denmark, where he was born in 1861. I am able to trace his family back to the 1700s. His father was Niels Rasmussen (1816-1887), his grandfather was Rasmus Lassen (1785-1861) and his great grandfather was Lass Olesen. We know Lass Olesen was 52 in the 1801 Danish census. These generations demonstrate the practice of adding “sen” in Denmark to the father's first name to form the last name of his sons. I am able to trace backwards because Denmark has digitized almost all of the parish church records, which list baptisms, confirmations, and often marriages with the parents' names.

I am particularly interested in Jens Nielson, my great grandfather, because my mother remembers spending time visiting him and her grandmother on their farm in western Iowa. We know that he immigrated from Denmark in 1875 and settled in Hutchinson, Minnesota, where he married my great grandmother, also a Danish immigrant,

in 1887. Fortunately, I knew the exact date of their marriage. A very helpful person in the McLeod County (Minnesota) records office was able to find the record of their marriage (searching by date) and sent me a copy. On this official document, my great grandfather's name is listed as James Nelson in one place and James Nielsen in another. The document records that he married Anna K. Thompson, who also appears as Anne Kristine Thomson on the document. We know her name was Ane Kristine Thomsen (based on the parish records for her baptism and confirmation). They farmed first along the Crow River (Minnesota) in a low area, which flooded often. They then moved to a farm in the Loess Hills in western Iowa. Notice that my great grandfather has already acquired one variations of his first name and one variation of his last name.

I had a general idea of where the farm was and able to locate the precise location on a digitized 1919 plat map at the University of Iowa, for the Belvidere Township in Monona County. Some plat maps (depending on the state and year) list the land owner and also have a directory of the farmers. The plat map shows the 80 acres my great grandfather farmed and he is recorded as John Nielsen. The directory entry also lists him as John Nielsen, his wife as Anna, and two daughters at home—Minnie and Margaret (my grandmother). My husband was able to locate the area on Google maps, and (using the satellite view) see where trees still outline the 80 acres, although the farm house is gone.

Jens, my great grandfather, was variously known as James and John in the United States, depending on who was recording his name. The name on his

gravestone is, however, Jens Nielsen, which I find comforting.

Conducting genealogical research is, indeed, like disappearing down the rabbit hole in *Alice in Wonderland*. One enters a strange, surreal, and often nonsensical world with many twists and turns. Following personal names is essential when conducting genealogical research, but often is truly a rabbit hole. How much easier the process would be if all genealogy websites had the equivalent of MARC name authority records with tagged data and formatted notes, all of which could be retrieved by standard search queries!

Postscript: I thought it would be interesting to tromp around on the farmland my great grandfather owned, but no direct access roads exist anymore. While in western Iowa, we stopped at a house in the area to see if the people living there owned the farmland. They did not, and advised against walking across the fields because locals have a problem with outsiders hiding meth labs in the hills and are suspicious of strangers. Not willing to take the risk, we drove on.

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made greatly happy at a modest cost to the many versus the case where many are made modestly happy at a great cost to one, Mill's ethics are not only consequentialist but also majoritarian—the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people.

But what of the minority, are we not also concerned with their well-being? Mill addressed the issue of the “tyranny of the majority” in *On Liberty*.<sup>2</sup> Mill gives various remedies to address this problem including checks on government and also the establishment of a systems of rights guaranteeing the liberties of individuals. Foremost of his liberties, and with particular application for librarians, is the “liberty of thought and discussion.”<sup>3</sup> A system of liberties and rights is, by definition, an area where government may not tread, and in a general moral system is a restraint on individuals and institutions, and obliges us to respect those rights. Such a system is not consequential, but is one defined by obligation, and is termed “deontological” for the Greek word *deon*, meaning “duty.”

Michael Sandel illustrates the difference between consequentialist and deontological ethics through his now-famous “runaway trolley” dilemma:

Suppose you are the driver of a trolley car hurtling down the track at sixty miles an hour. Up ahead you see five workers standing on the track, tools in hand. You try to stop, but you can't. The brakes don't work. You feel desperate, because you know that if you crash into these five workers, they will all die. (Let's assume you know that for sure.)

Suddenly, you notice a side track, off to the right. There is a worker on that track, too, but only one. You realize that you can turn the trolley car onto the side track, killing the one worker, but sparing the five.

...

Now consider another version of the trolley story. This time, you are not the driver but an onlooker, standing on a bridge overlooking the track. (This time, there is no side track.) Down the track comes a trolley, and at the end of the track are five workers. Once again, the brakes don't work. The trolley is about to crash into the five workers. You feel helpless to avert this disaster—until you notice, standing next to you on the bridge, a very heavy man. You could push him off the bridge, onto the track, into the path of the oncoming trolley. He would die, but the five workers would be saved. (You consider jumping onto the track yourself, but realize you are too small to stop the trolley.)<sup>4</sup>

If you take action to minimize death and suffering, you are clearly adhering to a consequentialist/greatest happiness ethic. Many people, however, feel restrained in the second scenario to not actively cause the death of a bystander, even if it results in less suffering. Despite the constraints of the artificial scenario, we can perceive at work here the presence of a moral imperative to not take an action that will result in the pain and suffering of a fellow human being. Duty compels many to violate the Greatest Happiness Principle rather than taking an action that will cause harm.

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### Cataloging Ethics

Where exactly is this trolley headed? Is cataloging such a perilous activity, and have we been neglecting occupational health to the degree that all new masters in library and information students should receive training in workplace safety, and ethical training in making life and death decisions?

I hope not. But over the years and throughout cataloging theory, we have witnessed an astonishing adherence to majoritarian ethics without a proper consideration of minority needs or protections. The latest manifestation of this problem is to be found in the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions "Statement of International Cataloguing Principles" which states as its first two general principles:

- 2.1. Convenience of the user. Convenience means that all efforts should be made to keep all data comprehensible and suitable for the users. The word "user" embraces anyone who searches the catalogue and uses the bibliographic and/or authority data. Decisions taken in the making of descriptions and controlled forms of names for access should be made with the user in mind.
- 2.2. Common usage. Vocabulary used in descriptions and access points should be in accordance with that of the majority of users.<sup>5</sup>

Clearly our focus is going to turn to that appearance of majoritarianism in principle 2.2, but let us take them

in order. An occasional frustration in our field is the relatively slow pace of reform and technological innovation, and I think we have an outstanding case of the first in issue 2.1. Hope Olson's commitment to pluralism does not just target linguistic practices of naming and nomenclature, but also the idea of the idealized universal user.<sup>6</sup> In 2001 she wrote of the idea of "Charles Cutter and the presumption of universality."<sup>7</sup> The previous column in this series was dedicated to the politics of knowledge and knowledge representation, which posited that social practices of knowledge follow basic social formations—that people are divided by various factors into different communities and groupings. Some of these groupings are non-controversial and self-apparent; people speak different languages and are divided by interests and levels of expertise. French-speaking doctors of infectious disease have different knowledge and reading practices and different needs than non-English speaking immigrant children that have recently arrived in the United States. More controversial are feminist, critical race, and post-colonial statements that knowledge practices also vary by gender, race, region and other factors. Users vary in the information they use and how they use it and in their vocabulary, including the vocabulary they use when constructing queries.

If all users were the same, the only differences among them would be in the various queries they pose on various topics, but we know there is a tremendous variety in search terms when searching on the same topic, and there is tremendous variety in

how users judge the documents they retrieve. We can easily dispense with the idea that all users are the same; the open question is whether querying and other information practices exhibit patterns amongst groups or whether those varieties are purely random. We do not have much evidence on this. One consideration is the near-axiomatic statement that a community of people tends to develop and share a vocabulary, and develop naming conventions and other practices of linguistic cohesion. Hashtag movements might be one weak example. But many groups often celebrate linguistic invention—a churn of new words and expressions. And, since we are talking about search behavior here, people conduct subject searching at the margins of their knowledge—the paradoxical situation where users have to name what it is they do not know, what Belkin called an "anomalous state of knowledge," a situation that might generate more terminological variety.<sup>8</sup> Whitmire examined the use of academic libraries by undergraduates and found that students of color were more likely to use the library than their white counterparts.<sup>9</sup> As interesting as the results are, they do not tell us much about information seeking *per se*, or the use of the catalog. Bates described differences between scientists and humanities scholars in their query practices back in the age of Dialog searching—scientists tend to search for topics, and humanists tend to search for personal names, but while large patterns in search behavior are interesting, we still see variety in the selection of the individual terms.<sup>10</sup>

## The Importance of Context. Or Culture?

It is common to hear that there are no strong determinants in information seeking practices, and that what a user actually does, from selecting sources, entering terms, judging bibliographic descriptions, judging retrieved documents, etc., is highly dependent on “context.” Thus, for example, we have a conference, ISIC, or “Information Seeking in Context.” The job of contextual meta-theory is to identify the various contextual factors that influence query term selection and other behaviors. Such factors might include current knowledge, educational attainment, previous reading, is this for a school paper, age, early vs. late stage research, the nature of controlled vocabulary, etc. These factors pertain to the system, to the nature of the problem being investigated, and to user characteristics. Some of the difficulty here is the behavioral model in the first place. But I wonder sometimes if “context” is a lazy way of referencing the concept of “culture.”

So the evidence is . . . mixed? On the one hand we can clearly dispense with the idea that all users are the same—there is too much variety of information seeking practice and query vocabulary to support a model of the universal user. Is there perfect irregularity? Are there no patterns in vocabulary use and, thus, no means to group users? Here the evidence is not so much mixed as it is underwhelming. We see some broad patterns by disciplinary factors, and we see some variation by race and ethnicity in broad measures of library use. Some of the variety we see corresponds to user

characteristics—educational attainment, previous reading, etc.—that are traceable to other cultural factors like race, ethnicity, and gender. But more so, given that we see cultural factors in so many of our social systems like policing, housing, education, income, health—the list is really long, it would be incredibly odd if those factors did not show up in information seeking and use. At this point it almost needs to be disproven rather than proven. So, as a weak theory, when it comes to using the library catalog, we can conclude that there are users of different types. The uncertainty is given more to our lack of investigation, and perhaps the complexity of the evidence, rather than the dubiousness of the claim. ICP 2.2 “Common usage” seems to imply users can be divided into a majority and a minority. So what do we mean by that? What are the implications?

## Duty and the Politics of Difference

Universalist conceptions of the user would not be so offensive for obscuring human differences if they did not also obscure the politics of those differences. The politics are such that we see information practice favor certain kinds of users over others. This is what we mean by the politics of information: that some groups have their information needs met and others do not. Even what counts as information in the first place is defined by majoritarian culture. The contents of our academic library music collections would be one demonstration of that idea. So we need to stop saying “the user.” There are users, there are kinds of users, and there are kinds of people. How those three statements

relate to each other is an important question, but we know enough of people and of human variety that we should stop saying “the user.”

So, back to Mill. Meeting the needs of the majority, however defined, prompts the question “what of the minority?” Or even better, minorities, because we live in a multicultural society, not a bicultural one. How are they protected? Do they have rights? The America Library Association Bill of Rights makes it clear on an individual basis that they do.<sup>11</sup>

We will discuss the idea of “literary warrant” and the use of syndetic structure in an upcoming column to find ways to assist users who deploy a minoritized vocabulary in their queries: popular terms, vernacular words and phrases for scientific or scholarly concepts, de-biased terminology where majoritarian policies deliver offensive names for things and people. We should consider these ameliorative methods for addressing a problem created by our embrace of a majoritarian policy in regards to descriptions and access points. A frank assessment of these measures is long overdue. And as librarians, we hate things that are overdue.

But our professional duty ought not to stop there. We are not bystanders to a trolley accident. We built and operate the trolley line. We have an active duty to not only not create an information underclass, or but also not to ignore such classes when we encounter them. Piketty says “the diffusion of knowledge . . . is the key to overall productivity growth as well as the reduction of inequality both

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within and between countries.”<sup>12</sup> Our quest for social equality is to appreciate human difference when it is important for cultural identity, and to remove the odious consequences that occur when we place groups into a hierarchy, which we do when we address the needs of one group and neglect the needs of another. “Difference without domination” is how Danielle Allen describes our task.<sup>13</sup> We need a duty-based ethics that not only obscures social difference, but one that promotes it, and advocates for the design of information services that meet the needs of a minority.

We started with a 19<sup>th</sup> century Englishman, so let us conclude there, and let us at the same time revisit an old friend, and one of our own kind, a bibliographer and librarian. In his testimony to the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the British Museum, in June, 1836, Anthony Panizzi said,

I want a poor student to have the same means of indulging his learned curiosity, of following his rational pursuits, of consulting the same authorities, of fathoming the most intricate inquiry as the richest man in the kingdom, as far as books go, and I contend that the Government is bound to give him the most liberal and unlimited assistance in this respect.<sup>14</sup>

Doing so may yet result in increasing the general happiness. But it is certainly our duty as well.

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# Naïve Questions and Tenuous Connections.....→

## Exclusivity Is Not Essential to Promotion

By Kevin Merriman

As a librarian, I often consider the relationship of individuals with those around them in contexts such as copyright, content licensing, interlibrary loan, and the tragedy of the commons. I also have an affinity for words and ideas, coming back to the deceptively fixed nature of a text itself to explore the decidedly mutable interpretations of said text. To wit, one often returns to the underpinnings of copyright in the U.S. Constitution, Article I, Section 8, Clause 8: “[The Congress shall have Power . . .] To promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts, by securing for limited Times to Authors and Inventors the exclusive Right to their respective Writings and Discoveries.”<sup>1</sup> I consider today that “promotion” is not meant to mean “exclusive right” but enabling: encouragement or facilitation but certainly not the wellspring of all human knowledge and thus should not be so restrictive as commonly interpreted. Contemporarily, promotion may benefit more from direct funding than exclusive right to reproduce and derive content. In a global information economy where information flows at the speed of light, does life-plus-70-years really promote advancement of human knowledge? Does this temporary ownership inspire creation? Work in the arts and sciences took place long before the creation of copyright and while ensuring credit and compensation could ensure a livelihood, is it doing so contemporarily?

I also find it interesting to consider the multiple aspects of the supporting conceptual structures behind justification of copyright because there is much more at stake than the individual artist, author, or scientist

including the moral rights of the author who created a work, the economic rights of a benefactor who paid to have a copy made, the property rights of the individual owner of a copy, and a sovereign’s right to censor and to regulate the printing industry.<sup>2</sup>

There is inherent tension in the system that is not always obvious to people affected by the system, especially for researchers such as university students and professors who create and consume the content. Moreover, changes in technology have caused a sea change of the reality in which these concepts operate. The gap between what was originally, literally, the right to print copies of a written work to legislation around the use of electronic impulses underlying a wholly digital work is as vast as the distance between a tangible thing and an intangible idea. Copyright law ostensibly crafted to promote advancement is not keeping up with technology.

The reliance on law to govern rights and the technology to communicate “progress in science and useful arts” create circumstances that I characterize as “can,” “cannot,” and “will



Kevin Merriman

not.” Libraries *can* purchase a print monograph. There are many we *will not* purchase. We *can* send the print copy to another library for lending to an otherwise unaffiliated user. We *cannot* transport a physical copy faster than physics permits, such as by the still-hypothetical concept of teleportation. That technology does not exist. Publishing platforms *can*, however, permit very broad simultaneous access and nearly limitless, nearly instantaneous, nearly perfect copies across great distances. That technology, unlike teleportation, is very real. However, generally speaking, publishers often *will not* use it. They *will not* because of the economic motivation of their role in the system of knowledge creation, that of false scarcity.

### One Needs Access to Progress

This brings me back to the people affected. Setting aside the socioeconomic influences of an individual’s access to information (such as inequities of educational access and other

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fundamental limitations such as the digital divide), faculty and students at the same university have widely varying experiences of access to intellectual content in ways that confuse them because they are rooted in their worldview and their own objectives. Under the current circumstances of enforced remote education, professors are turning to school libraries more than ever before to provide content—as most have done so successfully for hundreds of years in the world of print and photocopies.

Today, a simple and attainable request is to provide access to a digital copy of a journal article for which the library has secured permission and pre-paid for every student on campus to access, a highly-unlikely scenario but a common arrangement. A library may even purchase or lease access by request for the students in a particular class as it is cost-effective and within their budget and mission. The library also provides per a sitewide license a variety of e-books that could be simultaneously read by hundreds of students, possibly even the entire student population should they stagger their downloads so as not to overwhelm the limits of the technology. Now that these technologies are common, the cognitive dissonance is striking for faculty and students when the library replies to a request with “I’m sorry, we can do this, but we cannot do that because the vendor will not license the content for this use case.” A simple example of this is the contrast between a site-licensed e-book and an electronic textbook available only with licensing for individuals. Another example is the library being willing to scan a limited portion of a print text but not scan

the entire book. Here the distinctions between *can* and *cannot* are merely conceptual and often they are actually *will not* because of legal implications or artificially enforced technical hurdles. Further, the copyright holder, usually the publisher rather than the creator, *could* provide these services but *chooses* not to do so.

### Knowledge Is Power

These idiosyncratic details are so known to librarians that they generally do not merit mention, but I want to highlight that they are not inevitable absolute truths; they are choices made by us and our partners in knowledge production. This should be evident by the shock of our users when we explain that just because they can buy a personal copy of an e-book online does not mean the library can buy the same e-book and lend it to them. Despite the critical place of libraries and educational institutions in the progress of science and useful arts, technological advances have shifted the balance of these four aspects of copyright: author, benefactor, owner, and sovereign. The library, as a copy owner (but not copyright holder) in the world of post-print publishing, has fewer and fewer options despite educational considerations written into law and many of the legitimate options such as broad licensing or licensing perpetual access incur costs so they are applied selectively. Need I also mention the controversy about use as researchers more and more broadly attempt to apply new methods such as text-mining to a corpus that had been licensed for more pedestrian research methodology. That so many details are sorted in the courts suggests that all parties are not working towards the same ends.

Despite the unprecedented challenges that libraries currently face providing support for education and research with incredible and increasing emphasis on remote-access, this crisis is highlighting artificial barriers to content. More professors than ever are grappling with the fact that the textbooks they assign can still be cost-prohibitive to students and that the library has limited options to offset that cost. Further, they and their students who are paying attention (and they *are* paying attention) are realizing that those options are oddly and obviously limited to print reserves which, in many ways, could be considered anachronistic in 2021, but remain an invaluable application of copyright law in the freedom to purchase and share content in support of a course. Teaching faculty are grappling with the fact that the assumptions they hold about their library’s liberties in digitizing print holdings for assigned reading are not in line with legal realities as we ask them to perform copyright assessments and deny their requests to digitize quantities that exceed the threshold set by service agreements, which ironically may be tied to institutional risk assessments because of the legal implications of doing so. Authors are being confronted with the uncomfortable truth that their work cannot be put on digital reserve for a course they are teaching as they themselves do not hold legal copyright to their own work.

Another confounding factor, which is not coincidental but certainly fortuitous in its timing, is the growth of conversations about Open Access models.<sup>3</sup> I say “not coincidental” because they have been forced by laws such as Plan S. (“Plan S is an initiative for Open Access publishing that was

launched in September 2018 . . . . Plan S requires that, from 2021, scientific publications that result from research funded by public grants must be published in compliant Open Access journals or platforms.”<sup>4</sup>) These models need extensive attention and critical review because we cannot afford to botch this unprecedented opportunity to address global equity issues as well as access challenges for our local research and teaching constituencies. Open Access would unequivocally accelerate progress of science and useful arts in ways that may not have been possible under historical copyright concepts.

Research and education institutions embody mission-based motivations to contribute to the corpus of human knowledge. Creators want credit, but the other profit-generating protections afforded by copyright are not motivators for these creators. However, profit-generating copyright protections are deeply embedded in many academic publishers’ business models. Current models of academic publication privilege, to some extent, the institutions which can afford subscriptions to content. Some criticize that moving to Open Access models based on author publishing fees will privilege these same institutions because they will have the funds to participate as content producers while less-well-funded researchers will be able to “read but not publish.” A further argument is that the proposed author-fee models are even out of reach for even well-funded institutions that are high producers of content because they would have to pay the fees on behalf of their researchers. Such arguments suggest that comparatively, the current system is cheaper and more sustainable but this comparison holds only when other models

are excluded from the list of possibilities. These models are rooted in profit rather than cost-recovery but many cost-recovery models are concurrently criticized as not having brand-recognition and credibility. These mutually supporting arguments against change build a case that what exists is still the most stable and robust model, so new models of academic publishing are difficult to launch and scale.

Even those who are suspicious will acknowledge “bureaucratic red tape and inflated prices have hamstrung science for decades. Plan S is not a perfect solution, but it’s the closest we’ve seen.”<sup>5</sup> Publishers are still integral to the work we need to do but should not capitalize on research efforts to better the human condition. The human condition has always been challenging, but

among the adaptations making up human nature . . . are inventions that magnify their own power, including the printed and electronic word and institutions of science and governance, which allow knowledge to accumulate over generations. When people deploy knowledge to improve their lives, retaining and combining the innovations that work and discarding those that don’t, progress can take place.<sup>6</sup>

### Proof of Concept

In the spring of 2020, during the onset of the era of pandemic-enforced working from home, many academic publishers were generous in proving what halcyon possibilities exist by throwing open the digital gates and offering shelter from the scourge but now, a year later, many have rebuilt the paywalls to shift focus to taking

publishing fees rather than dissemination fees. Depending on the academic calendar of the institution, we are now in the second or third semester under duress; even K12 school have students who have moved up a grade since starting virtual and hybrid teaching. Educators and researchers are still struggling with the impersonality of online education, but by now many also have come to new levels of understanding about the physicality of working with primary materials, rare materials, and other special collections with real limitations as compared to the artificial limitations set in place to maximize publisher profitability.

Remember what you saw was possible: everyone working together for the common goal of uniting researcher and students with access to the current corpus of human knowledge. Librarians need to continue having pointed conversations about open access, creative commons licensing, and the roles of authors, editors, and reviewers in underpinning the current academic publishing model. We need to reject the false dichotomy that conventional publishing is too expensive to maintain and universal Open Access is too expensive to implement. As Brewerton observed in 2003, “Those with a firm hold on the purse strings do not care about vague philosophy—they want concrete returns.”<sup>7</sup> That alternative motivators for research and publishing exist should be proof enough to erode restrictions put on academic and scientific work, but we now have added evidence that paywalls and convoluted licensing hampers the work of researchers. Expanded access at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic combined

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with ongoing access to research related to fighting the pandemic reinforces that progress in 2021 must be based on open, collaborative efforts. New models are being invented and tested that gives one hope, but still there is often a glaring profit motive and, while profit in itself is not bad and copyright itself is not necessarily an outdated concept, we should remember that we in libraries have a greater purpose in our efforts. We in libraries, in education, in research, and in publishing are all part of a thoughtful, coordinated, structured system of systems that exists by and for the betterment of humanity. Libraries can provide the proof of our success in quantitative and qualitative measures. Active engagement highlighting the concrete returns of our efforts towards our missions will hold sway. Although we are in trying times and flesh is weak, the challenges of today are golden opportunities for dramatic transformation of copyright and for-profit publishing operating under the guise of “promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts.”<sup>8</sup>

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## Dollars and Sense.... Fiction Becomes Reality

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and the replicator that can produce them, it occurred to me that this is not the first time science fiction appeared to predict things we are experiencing now, such as space travel, which goes back to my childhood’s first sci-fi love, Buck Rogers; warp drive, another Star Trek engineering feat; and the like. But it is the first time that a device as acceptable in sci-fi television and movie scripts as food replicators has appeared to materialize before our eyes—really, actually appeared to not only be possible, but real, actual reality. Am I startled? Yes! Did I think it was a hoax? Yes. Did I think it was impossible? Yes. And, yet, here we are, with an article in a real e-newspaper claiming it is being done.

What can this mean for us as librarians and for our collections, as they appear in the sci-fi works with which I am familiar?

### The Library of the Distant (Imaginary) Future

Stories that regularly experience space and time travel—activities of our imagination—predict we will still have libraries in the distant future, but they do not resemble anything like those that currently exist in the real world. First, they tend to be managed by a single librarian with no other personnel. Second, the collections are unlikely to consist of books or even books and other media. Videos and holograms tend to be more typical media of communication. More surprisingly, human beings of the future still go to places called libraries, despite our current abilities that make it possible to send resources

to wherever the person happens to be via digital devices designed to receive and display them.

Sci-fi is often paired with fantasy literature, the two genres often being intertwined in the development of their stories. Fantasy libraries also have odd resources, lack of personnel, and sci-fi elements in their descriptions. Perhaps, one of the most startling fantasy libraries was conceived by Haruki Murakami in *The Strange Library*.<sup>2</sup> In this story, a single librarian manages a weird collection that includes books that suck readers into their plots as added characters, among other things going on in its basement that are far more horrifying to contemplate. Five more tales about libraries in science fiction described along with Murakami's are Jorge Luis Borges' *The Library of Babel*, Terry Pratchett's "The Unseen University Library" in *The Science of Discworld*, Walter Moers' *The Labyrinth of Dreaming Books*, Jasper Fforde's "The Great Library" in *The Thursday Next Series*, and Genevieve Cogman's *The Invisible Library*.<sup>3</sup> A brief review of a recent book by Gene Wolfe titled *Interlibrary Loan* appearing in *The New Yorker* described futuristic libraries that "loan out clones of authors."<sup>4</sup>

In addition to these examples of libraries in science fiction, there is a lot of existing science fiction in today's libraries. *Wikipedia*'s article on science fiction libraries includes 26 listings of outstanding research collections.<sup>5</sup> Most are located in the United States and are part of university library holdings, though some are in Japan, France, Austria, and elsewhere. Some of these collections contain tens of thousands of

examples of the genre.

## Other Kinds of Libraries

I enjoy browsing in libraries in person when I have the time to spend there, but convenience often outweighs pleasure because browsing is a very time-consuming endeavor. I believe that futuristic libraries are not going to be like Murakami's or Moers' visions of what the future might bring. But I do believe that written documents, visual images, and sound recordings are likely to be "sent" to borrowers digitally, however they are collected, cataloged, and stored. We are already doing a lot of this today. The fact is, however, examples of "libraries"—that is, institutions containing organized collections of the resources we now connect with libraries and designed to be borrowed by clients/users/patrons have not yet been built as digital versions of what we think of now as libraries. The larger organization with its knowledge management mission, if you like, is missing.

This is not to say we do not have collections of various kinds—databases—designed to be used by borrowers. There are many of these. But they are not institutions like libraries. After all, every e-journal is a database of collected issues of that journal intended to be read by subscribers. Is that not a futuristic kind of library? Assuredly, it is in a literary sense, but not in an institutional sense. A library is so much more than just its collections. It has a whole superstructure that includes experts in gathering the resources; organizing them; managing their use; explaining, training, and helping the people who

use them find what they want from the collection; and serving a user community with expanded services for their entertainment and enlightenment.

Is Project Gutenberg not a futuristic library? It meets the basic notion of libraries in terms of collecting books and disseminating them. But it lacks the superstructure of experts, educators, and community programming that now defines libraries of all kinds. The interactions between collections and users only go so far. A higher bar was set in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century for added services as well as for including resources in new media.

Libraries with sophisticated websites are beginning to offer more of what can be expected from tomorrow's libraries. Among these are collections that can be sent anywhere, aid in understanding what is in them and how to find what one seeks from them, and programming based on them as well as other topics of interest. All these elements, managed in an interactive online environment, are starting to come together in a few places.

## Future Libraries

In the distant past, books were chained to the wall. Over many years, decades and centuries, we moved from that to closed stacks, and, later, to open stacks for most, if not all, of the resources held by libraries. Long ago, libraries tended to serve a smaller and more specific clientele. Today, we are moving slowly toward digital files that can be shared over vast distances to people with invisible ties to the owning library. Among recent innovations, a TV news segment I watched recently

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showed a public library in Virginia delivering resources to its readers via drones.<sup>6</sup> That is something we might expect from a futuristic library. It made the news because the reporter believes it is a first.

Surely, there is much more to come. Maybe replicators that can make meat out of vegetables can turn a digital file into a print-on-paper book that lasts for a specified borrowing period, after which it disappears. This would eliminate the need for tracking borrowed resources, creating and disseminating overdue notices, and levying and collecting fines, would it not? We might also envision being able to browse a library's holdings through its website, even turning pages of books the way Amazon.com allows buyers to read a small section of a book in which they are interested. Can you think of other resources and services it would be nice to provide?

Aside from the physical changes that might occur in the future, how might library finances be managed differently than they are today? What kinds of new ways of remunerating writers, composers, performers, photographers, videographers, and all the rest of the creative people as well as editors and publishers, programmers and database managers, and all the rest of the organizational people involved in bringing resources to libraries might make it possible for their products to be disseminated differently on a global basis? It is something to think about for a future column.

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## Reality Check

### Developing a New Collection Development Textbook

By Vicki L. Gregory



Vicki L. Gregory

The second edition of my textbook, *Collection Development and Maintenance for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Libraries: An Introduction*, now being in print, I have been asked to comment both on the origins and development of the first edition and the rationale for the second edition, which contains expanded treatment concerning academic libraries, collection development, intellectual freedom issues, self-publishing, and the effect of new technology on collection development.<sup>1</sup>

### Why a New Collection Development Textbook?

When my friend Charles Harmon, at the time Vice-President of Neal-Schuman Publishers, Inc. (now Executive Editor at Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group) approached me about preparing the first edition of my collection development textbook

for Neal-Schuman, I considered whether library educators really needed another textbook on the subject. I had been teaching collection development courses for some time and found myself often encountering resistance from my students, first, to actually reading and studying the text that I was then using, and second, as we moved more to online instruction, to even purchasing the textbook. Whether in oral lectures or through online print lectures and essays, an instructor can never fully adequately provide all the relevant information to which students need to be exposed nor stress enough those items that they really need to remember. They need a book as at least a source of reference.

### The Underlying Approach of the First Edition

Prior to the publication of my first edition, I had been using an early edition of G. Edward Evans' very comprehensive text, *Developing Library and Information Center Collections*.<sup>2</sup> Although this large textbook doubtless contained just about everything the students needed, I found students were avoiding reading it, leading to frustration on the parts of both the students and the instructor. Even though I was not assigning and asking students to read every chapter, the ones that I did want the students to study were long and deeply involved in aspects that affected all collection development librarians. These chapters also included detailed and complex material that applies to different types of libraries.

Because my students were at that time largely public library-oriented (out of a typical class of around 40, I would have 20-25 in public libraries, 7-10 interested in academic libraries,

and 9-12 interested in school libraries; the number of students interested in special libraries was usually less than 4), I felt that no current textbook other than Evans' really contained enough focus on public libraries to meet the need. But that text was not as well received by students as it ought to have been, so I concluded a new textbook was needed. So, for the first edition, I purposely prepared a work much shorter than Evans', still stressing public libraries, but that read in a more accessible conversational tone, in contrast to a perhaps a "stuffer" academic style with large numbers of cross references and footnotes per page. My approach was to put the essentials in the textbook and then assign journal articles to supplement the text in order to provide in-depth information about procedures and issues in the different types of libraries, but with an emphasis on public libraries. Some discussion of collection development issues related to other types of libraries also were placed in the text, but these were not lengthy, and I included references to point students to the places where they could access more information if they were specifically interested in academic, special, or other types of information centers.

### Why the need for a Second Edition?

After using the first edition for several years, I could see areas that could be added or expanded. For example, I was beginning to see many more students interested in academic libraries, so it seemed appropriate to add more information pertaining to that setting for the second edition. But I still felt that courses that were not primarily involved with academic librarianship needed a book such as mine.

(If I had been teaching students who were primarily interested in academic libraries, Peggy Johnson's textbook *Fundamentals of Collection Development and Management* would have been a perfect fit.<sup>3</sup>)

### Better Balance among Library Types

The first edition's emphasis on public library collections began to appear problematic, however, as I was beginning to have more students interested in academic libraries, and so a second edition with more prominence of materials appropriate to academic libraries seemed indicated to add more information pertaining to collection development in that setting. But I still felt that a collection development course of study that was not primarily involved with academic librarianship needed a book such as mine.

### Need for Stronger Emphasis of Intellectual Freedom Concepts

Another area that I determined to expand upon in the second edition was the first edition's limited discussion of intellectual freedom concepts. This was based on two factors. One was a direct result from assignments that I gave to students on weeding, which referenced a list of items for consideration, many of which needed to be carefully considered before weeding from the collection. Over several years I had found myself less than happy with the juxtaposition of the ideals that students uttered so readily in class about the need for protecting intellectual freedom and how they handled a practical assignment. When faced with a weeding assignment, they

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## Developing a New Collection Development Textbook

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often found those principles difficult to apply. Because there were so many objections to many items in the collection, they wound up weeding based on such difficult aspects as sexual content (in public library collections) or "too frivolous" (in academic libraries). Second, during that time I had been giving several conference presentations on the concept of self-censorship for professional associations. The interest on this subject turned out to be huge, which verified for me that this was an important issue that was not being stressed enough in library and information science programs and textbooks generally. After I emphasized this concept in the second edition, I noticed a strong and increased student interest concerning self-censorship issues in both selection and weeding. (In a third edition, I would add even more to this section as more emphasis in the text does seem to have a positive effect on student decisions.)

### Self-Publishing Issues

Another area that I address in the second edition in more depth is self-publishing. The first edition only mentions self-publishing in terms of vanity presses where one expects to find something like a book of poems that only the author's mother would appreciate, resulting in the discovery of cases of the bound volumes when he or she dies. Of course, today that is not at all what is meant by self-publishing, so I treated it, along with e-publishing and print-on-demand, more thoroughly in the second edition. There are many reasons why authors self-publish today, and some authors will slip back and forth depending on the material or the interests of their regular print publisher.

A careful look at what is being self-published today can be a useful method for adding a lot of material to a library at much more reasonable cost, a major consideration for public libraries in particular. Fiction and memoirs are a large percentage of what is self-published, and these are popular areas with public library readers. If students are not yet convinced of the worth of self-published books, I would direct them to read Robert P. Holley's book (*Self-Publishing and Collection Development: Opportunities and Challenges for Libraries*), which should convince them to give self-published books another look.<sup>4</sup>

### Technological Changes

For the second edition I expanded the materials concerning technological changes, but not enough as it turns out; indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic has made digital no longer a choice at all, but rather a requirement in many library situations. It is difficult to know at present whether some of the necessary changes that all libraries have had to make during the past year will continue in the future, but there can be no doubt that there will be changes of some kind. Certainly, the importance of the role of technology in supporting remote access will become even more important and would deserve special in-depth treatment in a third edition.

### Conclusion

I am personally quite pleased with the improvements and additions made to the second edition especially in terms of improvements in student learning, as demonstrated in both classroom and on-line student discussions and in performance in writing assignment requirements and on tests. Of

course, emerging new materials formats and methods of approach to collection development and maintenance mean textbooks throughout the discipline will need to be updated regularly and at reasonable intervals to bring in new material. But we do need to remain aware of the costs to students when new editions come along too quickly. And there is administrative pressure from time to time to consider use of an older edition, but in the library and information science field as it experiences the many changes in publishers and holding formats, collection development is one area in which a textbook needs to be as up to date as possible.

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# Continuities.....→

## Changing Priorities: Trends in Physical and Electronic Resource Usage in U.S. Academic Libraries

By Yoel Kortick

*Note from Ben Abrahamse, "Continuities" author and editor:*

Not all librarians work in libraries. They also fulfill important roles for providers of library materials and systems. Yoel Kortick is such a librarian—for the last 20 years he has worked at Ex Libris in various capacities, and currently is Senior Librarian, working with product management. His contribution to "Continuities" presents an interesting perspective on the future of library collections.



Yoel Kortick

Over the past few decades libraries have moved from collections of books and other print media to complex collections of print and electronic resources. By looking at historical trends it is possible to conjecture what the future of these collections will look like. There are many different ways of looking at the data that reflect library collecting trends. I have looked at the way libraries spend their money. There are relatively few publications that focus on comparing expenditure trends for physical and electronic resources. However, in looking at expenditure and usage trends over a ten year period, one can posit a direct correlation between the resource type purchased and the type used.

### Trends: Physical and Electronic

Historically speaking, studies that focused on library usage tended to concentrate on three general areas: reference queries, circulation of physical materials and usage of electronic

materials, and gate counts (how many people enter the library and when). These metrics are useful, but lacking in precision. Patrons may use library services without ever passing through a library's gate. Physical items may be used, but never loaned. Usage of electronic material is often measured using COUNTER reports, but many institutions only load partial COUNTER reports and only for certain vendors.<sup>1</sup>

Another way to look at the relative usage of physical and electronic materials is by comparing library expenditures for the two. Establishing a clear correlation between changes in expenditure for a specific resource format and usage of that format is beyond the scope of this article (though it is planned for a future publication by this author).

I drew on aggregated anonymized data from ten randomly chosen academic institutions across the United States. While it is possible to look only at a subset of these institutions, for example by geographic location or discipline, my intention was to

obtain as broad a picture as possible. Furthermore, by not focusing on a specific subset of the institutions, their anonymity is ensured.

The data used for the study include percentages of expenditures for physical versus electronic format from calendar year 2010 to 2019, inclusive (full years only, as of November 2020). With this data, one will be able to see not only if electronic resource usage has increased, but how much. Has it increased since 2010 in a steady, gradual manner? Did it peak and come down? Or perhaps it peaked and remained steady? Also, can one apply a forecast algorithm to predict what will happen in the coming years? Though perhaps in these unique times, created by COVID-19, a standard forecast algorithm would not be enough.

### Literature Review

In his February 2011 article, "Preparing for the Long-Term Digital Future of Libraries," Marshall Breeding considered changes that might take

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Continuities.....

## Changing Priorities: Trends in Physical and Electronic Resource Usage in U.S. Academic Libraries

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place in the subsequent decade. He correctly surmised, “The obvious changes to anticipate involve major shifts toward digital formats, distributed through license arrangements, rather than physical materials available for purchase.”<sup>2</sup>

As early as 2008, in a study on library use from the 1990s to 2006, Charles Martell stated, “Use of the physical collections and services of academic libraries continues to plummet, with some exceptions, while use of electronic networked resources skyrockets.”<sup>3</sup>

One study specifically mentioning expenditures for physical and electronic resources is that by Jennifer Gerke and Jack M. Maness, which was conducted at the University of Colorado at Boulder (UCB).<sup>4</sup> While expenditures were not the main focus of the study, the following fact is noted: “The University Libraries at UCB in recent years began to spend a majority of the materials budget on electronic, as opposed to print, resources (over 56% in Fiscal Year 2007–2008). Reallocating monies in this manner appears to be in concert with patrons’ desires.”<sup>5</sup>

No review of the literature on library resource usage would be complete without taking the impact of COVID-19 into account. It is generally assumed, and backed up by data, that COVID-19 restrictions have contributed to an increase in the use of electronic resources. Regarding this phenomenon, Denise A. Garofalo writes in her study “Tips from the Trenches” that

all libraries, regardless of type, have found ways to highlight the digital

and electronic resources available to their users as we made this rapid and unplanned switch to remote everything. As we transition back to our physical buildings, maintaining the awareness of all the e-resources of the library will no doubt be a priority.<sup>6</sup>

The heightened “awareness of all the e-resources of the library” will surely increase electronic resource usage going forward.

### The Crossover

At the time of this research (November 2020), there were 948 institutions in the United States using Ex Libris Alma, a uniquely comprehensive cloud-based software as a service (SAAS) library services platform (LSP). Data from these institutions, for those of whom there is at least ten years of transaction data, was processed with Alma Analytics to identify expenditure trends. Alma Analytics has the capability, for example, to measure, track, and differentiate between expenditures for physical and electronic materials.

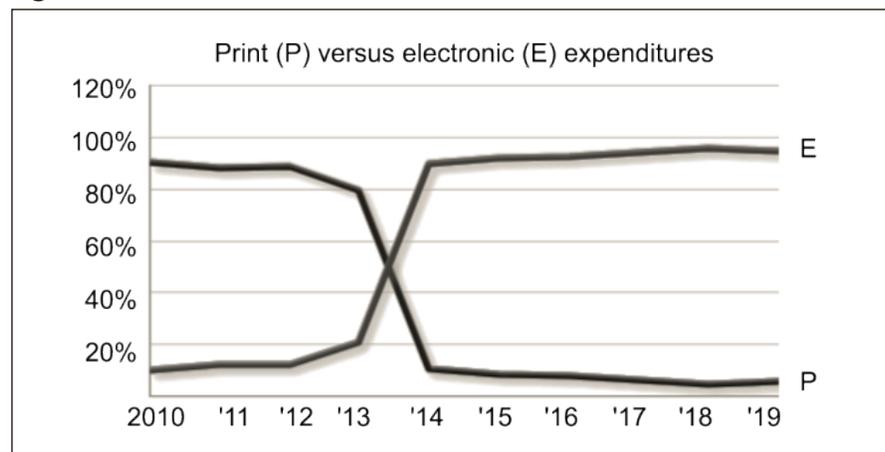
It is important to note that all the data were aggregated and completely anonymized, such that it was at no time possible for any researcher, the author of this article, or anyone else to identify the results from a specific institution. For further anonymity, percentages were used instead of actual monetary amounts; i.e., the percent of a library’s collection outlays expended on each type of resource (physical or electronic).

Typically, expenditures for physical format material in 2010 exceeded those for electronic format material. By 2019, however, expenditures for electronic formats were greater. The “crossover,” when expenditures on electronic resources surpassed those for physical materials, usually occurred between 2013 and 2016. Figure 1 shows the crossover point for one institution, which began spending less on print and more on electronic formats between 2013 and 2014.

### History and Trends

Ten institutions were randomly chosen for the study, and their

Figure 1. “Crossover” Point for One Institution



| Year | % Expended for Physical Format | % expended for Electronic Format |
|------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 2010 | 68.28                          | 31.72                            |
| 2011 | 65.52                          | 34.48                            |
| 2012 | 60.14                          | 39.86                            |
| 2013 | 56.53                          | 43.47                            |
| 2014 | 52.21                          | 47.79                            |
| 2015 | 44.25                          | 55.75                            |
| 2016 | 39.03                          | 60.97                            |
| 2017 | 35.86                          | 64.14                            |
| 2018 | 31.89                          | 68.11                            |
| 2019 | 26.55                          | 73.45                            |

Table 1. Raw Data for Ten Institutions

combined anonymized expenditure data was aggregated by year into one table and graph. This process was carried out multiple times, with a different set of ten institutions each time, yet the resulting data was remarkably similar in each case. While the actual percentages differed slightly, the trends remained the same.

The table of anonymized, aggregated data was uploaded to Data Visualization (DV), which is part of the Oracle Analytics Server (OAS) used by Alma. The various visualizations made it easy to identify trends, while a forecast could be created using the DV's integral features. Table 1 shows the raw, aggregated, and anonymized data for ten U.S. institutions.

The general trend is that, from 2010 to 2019, expenditures for electronic formats have increased and those for physical formats have decreased. With DV, one can see this trend represented in a line graph (Figure 2).

The data clearly support the conclusion that academic institutions in the United States have steadily decreased their expenditures for physical resources, while steadily increasing

Figure 2. Anonymized Trend Data for Ten U.S. Institutions

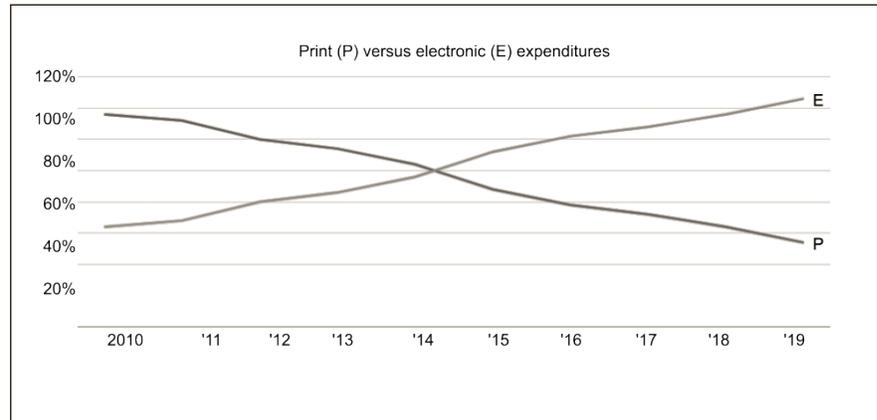
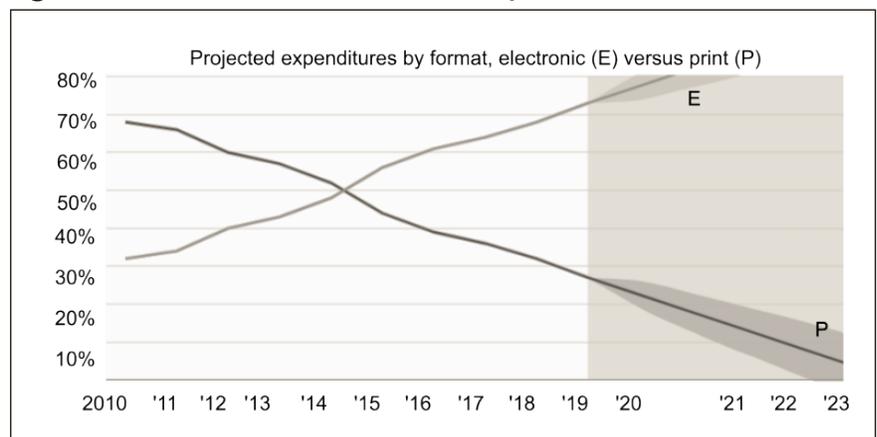


Figure 3. Forecast Based on Historical Expenditures



expenditures for electronic resources. By extension, one could assume patron use of resources in electronic formats also has increased relative to their use of physical materials.

It is possible to forecast what is likely to happen with library expenditures in the coming years. The trends established by these historical data strongly suggest that expenditures for resources in a physical format will continue to decrease, while expenditures for electronic-format materials will continue to increase; see Figure 3.

### Conclusion: A Watershed Moment

Empirical evidence indicates that academic institutions in the United States have increased library expenditures for electronic resources and decreased expenditures for physical resources. According to the forecast, this trend will continue. However, a factor not taken into account by forecasting algorithms is the impact of COVID-19. As noted above, the pandemic has increased awareness

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of electronic resources, which can be expected to cause increased use of those resources in the coming years, especially if potential patrons remain off-campus and access to the physical library remains limited. Such a situation would prevent many people from using and borrowing physical items from the library.

I think that the current pandemic will prove to be a watershed moment in terms of expenditures for and patron usage of physical and electronic resources. Many libraries are currently discovering that their patrons' needs can be met without ordering and processing large numbers of physical materials. Three factors will contribute to a sustained increase in the use of electronic materials even after the pandemic: processing an increasing quantity of electronic materials can be done remotely, electronic materials do not require additional space in the library or open shelves, and, most importantly, electronic materials can be accessed by patrons from anywhere.

Does this mean print collections will disappear entirely? I think not; there is still much that libraries will do, and collections that patrons will want, that remain tangible. But the data examined here suggest continued growth of electronic resources in library collections. A follow-up study looking at actual usage in the coming years would be able to examine the validity of this assessment.

### References and Notes

1. COUNTER provides a "Code of Practice," a standard that enables publishers and vendors to count

the use of electronic resources and ensures they can provide their library customers with consistent, credible and comparable usage data. See COUNTER, "About COUNTER," [www.projectcounter.org/about](http://www.projectcounter.org/about) (accessed Jan. 29, 2021), <https://www.projectcounter.org/>.

2. Marshall Breeding, "Preparing for the Long-Term Digital Future of Libraries," *Computers in Libraries* 31, no. 1 (Jan./Feb. 2011): 24-26.
3. Charles Martell, "The Absent User: Physical Use of Academic Library Collections and Services Continues to Decline 1995-2006," *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 34, no. 5 (Sept. 2008): 400-407.
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## Book Reviews

Raftus, Deborah, and Jeffrey Staiger, *Sudden Selector's Guide to Romance Languages and Literatures (ALCTS/CMS Sudden Selector's Series, 8)*. Chicago: Collection Management Section of the Association for Library Collections & Technical Services, 2020. 73 pp. ISBN 978-0-8389-4782-1 (softcover) \$30.50; ISBN 978-0-8389-4783-8 (e-book) \$13.50.

*Sudden Selector's Guide to Romance Languages and Literatures* is a welcome handbook for academic librarians assigned to selecting library material for Romance languages departments at colleges and universities. It is particularly welcome, because in the last 20 years many experienced subject specialist librarians hired because they had a second degree in one of the Romance languages, have been replaced by colleagues with no subject training in that area. This handbook by Deborah Raftus and Jeffrey Staiger provides information about the history of Romance languages, how Romance languages and literatures became a subject of study at American universities, and information about current trends in research in Romance languages and literatures, in addition to a bibliography of useful sources for collection development and invaluable advice about procedures, principles, and strategies by two experienced practitioners. Deborah Raftus is Librarian for French and Italian Studies, Spanish and Portuguese Studies, and Latin American and Caribbean Studies at the University of Washington in Seattle. Jeffrey Staiger is Librarian of Romance Languages at the University of Oregon. In addition to its useful contents, this handbook is well organized. It consists of five

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chapters: 1) “The Study of Romance Languages and Literatures”; 2) “When You Begin”; 3) “Selection and Collection Development”; 4) Professional Networks, and 5) “Outreach.”

The first chapter, “The Study of Romance Languages and Literatures,” sets the tone of the handbook, because it creates a knowledge foundation for the intended reader by providing basic information about the history of Romance languages and literatures and their study as an academic discipline at American colleges and universities, followed by an extensive coverage of academic trends of the last 20 or so years, which are pertinent to the development of collections that will support research in Romance languages and literatures today. While in the past most Romance language scholars would study texts, mostly canonical, by authors from the European country where the Romance language in question originated, today’s Romance language scholars’ texts may be films created in a non-European country where that Romance language is generally spoken. This chapter contextualizes the task of the hypothetical “sudden selector.” The second chapter, “When You Begin,” complements the first, by addressing practical issues confronted by all librarians assigned to manage and develop collections, such as funds and the limitations that they impose. They share their experience as selectors, suggesting strategies for assessing a collection and suggesting tools, including learning from past fund allocations. They advise the new selector to become informed about local and regional community collections of Romance languages and literatures, such as collections of popular fiction in Romance languages at public libraries or special collections

at research institutions in the region. In this chapter, the authors address upfront but do not explore two issues that have to be confronted by the librarian who is suddenly assigned to manage a research collection in the Romance languages and literatures: language skills and subject expertise, and ways to acquire them.

The third chapter, “Selection and Collection Development,” has a very useful selected bibliography of sources, including databases. The section on databases alerts the selector to the increasing number of open access databases of digitized primary sources in the Romance languages created by government and educational institutions in France, Italy, Spain, and Latin America. It also includes an extensive coverage of the challenges of covering contemporary literatures, where the sudden selector is encouraged to read book reviews and to become familiar with literary prizes awarded to books in the Romance languages in which they select. This chapter concludes with references to human resources—namely librarian colleagues at other institutions and approval plan vendors. The authors encourage the sudden selector with little subject knowledge about the Romance languages and literatures they have been assigned to consult vendors from the countries where those languages are official languages, and to attend book fairs abroad.

The fourth chapter, “Professional Networks,” and the fifth chapter, “Outreach,” explore the lack of subject knowledge and language expertise that I consider to be the most problematic aspect of assigning a “sudden selector” for Romance languages and literatures. Bibliographic sources like those mentioned in the third chapter have been at the core of guides for new librarians. In the past, when librarians for Romance

languages and literatures used to have a second degree, they were very useful in order to identify key sources to consult before making collections decisions. But they may not be very useful to librarians with no knowledge about Romance languages and literatures, because they lack the context that indicates their usefulness. Although the hypothetical “sudden selector” takes to heart the need to learn, it takes time to get that learning. In order to address that, in the fourth chapter the authors focus on professional organizations, whose lists they can consult. Among others, they mention the European Studies Section (ESS) of the Association of College and Research Libraries, the Seminar on the Acquisition of Latin American Library Material (SALALM), and the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA). They recommend joining scholarly societies, such as the Modern Language Association (MLA), remarking that the annual conferences of this organization include library related programs, and recommend taking classes. The fifth chapter covers closer to home ways to learn about Romance languages and literatures—outreach to faculty. The authors encourage the new librarians with little subject knowledge to establish a two-way flow of communication with their departments or programs. Communication with faculty members will inform the new librarian about their research projects and their subject matter. In the other hand, they encourage the librarian to attend at least one faculty meeting a year to provide updates about the library to the department and to invite questions and concerns.

*Sudden Selector’s Guide to Romance Languages and Literatures* ends with two useful appendices: a list

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of geographical entities in which at least one Romance language is the official language, and a sample proposal for international acquisitions travel. This is fitting, because one of the elements of complexity in current trends in research in Romance languages and literatures that they mention in the first chapter is that prominent literature in the Romance languages is not limited to the European country where that language originated, and one of the selection and collections strategies that they recommend in the third chapter is the importance of acquisitions travel. The authors combine the traditional and the practical components in this useful handbook, which I recommend for library research collections and to anyone in the position of “sudden” selector for Romance languages and literatures.

Rafael E. Tarragó, *Librarian for History, and Iberian, Ibero-American & Chicano/Latino Studies, University of Minnesota Libraries.*

**Talbott, Holly, and Ashley Zmau. *The Electronic Resources Troubleshooting Guide*. Chicago: ALA Editions, 2020. ix, 173 pp. ISBN 978-0-8389-4764-7 (softcover) \$59.99; ISBN 978-0-8389-4791-3 (e-book) \$48.00.**

Providing access to electronic resources such as e-books and databases has become a hugely important part of libraries’ service portfolios. And yet without proper management, a library’s electronic collections can become a nightmare for users and librarians alike. This is particularly true when a user’s access to an electronic resource is blocked; it can set off a series of interconnected technological and customer service challenges that library staff must address, often in

a time-sensitive manner. In order to prevent this type of situation from spiraling out of control, libraries need to foster and direct some of their e-resource staff’s skills and energy toward that most dreaded of technology-involved processes: *troubleshooting*.

Holly Talbott and Ashley Zmau’s *The Electronic Resources Troubleshooting Guide* identifies troubleshooting as an important but often overlooked skill in the portfolio of technical services skills.

[A]s library systems continue to grow in number and complexity, librarians are often at a loss when confronted with sudden breaks in access, unsure what caused them, how to fix them, or where to turn for answers ... we aim to fill this gap, equipping librarians with not only the knowledge and skills to diagnose and resolve access issues but also practical approaches for creating and maintaining effective workflows, recruiting and training staff across multiple departments, and making the most of their help ticket systems” (vii-viii).

This is no small task to accomplish in such a slender volume, but by focusing on the most important elements of troubleshooting as they arise in a library-specific context, the authors fulfill their promise.

The volume begins by placing the concept of “troubleshooting” into a wider context of problem-solving. After a brief discussion of fundamental concepts (what, for example, do we mean when we call something a “problem” or that said problem has been “solved”?), the authors argue that what libraries face when troubleshooting access to electronic resources is a twofold problem: it is at the same time a “user-focused” problem of managing a particular user’s access to a

particular resource, and a “technology-focused” problem of maintaining systematic access to a library’s electronic collections. While the two are always interrelated, they may play out on different and often opposed timescales—the user’s needs must be addressed as immediately as possible, while system-based problems often require iterative, long-term investigations. In order to confront this manifold set of problems the *Guide* introduces a seven-step method of problem solving, beginning with the identification of the problem and ending with the documentation and communication of the problem and its solution. This model serves as the organizing principle for the remainder of the book.

Perhaps the greatest challenge in troubleshooting access problems is simply determining where in the sequence of interconnected library systems that mediate the digital distance between users and collection the problem is occurring. In its second chapter, the *Guide* introduces the concept of the *access chain*, which the authors define as, “the paths of interconnected technologies a patron travels through in order to gain access to an e-resource” (20). The metaphor is well chosen, inasmuch as this sequence is made up, like a chain, of discrete steps, and a break in any one of these links causes the whole device to fail. The authors identify and explain the key functional moments in the access chain: access tools, knowledge management systems, linking systems, and authentication. Using these key concepts, the authors construct a number of typical access chains, making good use of diagrams to visualize the interlocking relationships among various elements. This chapter also provides a rich glossary of relevant systems and concepts that commonly appear in library configurations. The goal here is to enable readers

to map their existing systems onto these four interlocking functions, to gain a better understanding of how their particular institutional access chain operates.

In the chapters that follow, the *Guide* goes deeper into the specific details of problem-solving: how to get the best quality information from users when they report a problem (Chapter 3, "Soliciting Problem Reports"); synthesizing that information together with the troubleshooter's map of the access chain to identify potential causes for loss of access (Chapter 4, "Diagnosing Access Issues"); and of course, acting upon one's diagnosis to resolve the access issue for the user, as well as to ensure that whatever systematic issues have been identified are either remediated or (if such is not possible) communicated to the right people (Chapter 5, "Resolving Access Issues"). Lighter on theory than the preceding, these three chapters comprise the beating heart of the *Guide*. While quite detailed, the three are thematically connected not only by the overarching seven-step rubric, but by the re-use in each chapter of the same scenarios. Thus the reader is allowed to follow several types of access problem from beginning to end across the three chapters.

Having walked through the problem solving methodology outlined in the introduction, the authors take a different approach to the problem in Chapter 6, "Common Access Issues and Examples," which presents a veritable menagerie of troubles to be shot, ranging from simple broken links to complex authentication issues. For each scenario, the authors walk through the same sequence of describing the scenario, diagramming the relevant access chain, addressing the patron-side of the problem, and diagnosing and ultimately resolving the problem in the system. It seems to me this might be the most useful part of

the *Guide* over the long term, from the standpoint of an active troubleshooter.

In the final two chapters the focus of the book shifts outward, from identifying and solving particular access problems to how libraries might go about developing the process of electronic resource access troubleshooting—which, in many cases, is performed on a somewhat *ad hoc* basis by reference and technical services staff—into a more sustainable and programmatic approach. In Chapter 7, "Troubleshooting Workflows and Training," the authors envision troubleshooting as an integral and ongoing concern of libraries, one around they have built robust and flexible staffing solutions. They speculate and provide some useful advice as to how such a program might be organized and staff trained. This process is brought to its natural conclusion in the final Chapter 8, "Proactive Troubleshooting," in which the benefits of a standing troubleshooting squad in a library can be deployed to identify and resolve access problems before they are encountered by users.

*The Electronic Resources Troubleshooting Guide* is a timely and worthwhile effort to synthesize a lot of information, some of which is quite technical, into something that is not only quite readable from cover to cover, but also perhaps serviceable in the longer term as a ready reference for the troubleshooting e-resource librarian. It is written in clear and unadorned prose, with helpful visualizations and abundant bibliographic references. I enjoyed reading it and would recommend it to colleagues in libraries and other resource-based institutions, whose work depends on reliable access to electronic resources—which these days is more or less everyone.

*Ben Abrahamse, Cataloging Coordinator, Acquisitions & Discovery Enhancement, MIT Libraries.*

## News From the Field.....➔

### Of Professional Interest

■ ALA Editions has published the tenth edition of *Intellectual Freedom Manual*, by Martin Garnar and Trina Magi (ALA Editions, 2021), ISBN: 978-0-8389-4818-7, \$69.99. This updated version of a classic text is an essential resources for all libraries.

■ *Ebook Collection Development in Academic Libraries: Examining Preference, Management, and Purchasing Patterns*, a 2020 Choice White Paper, by John Novak, L. Angie Ohler, and Annette Day, ([https://static.od-cdn.com/Choice-Incorporating\\_Ebooks\\_into\\_Collection\\_Development.pdf](https://static.od-cdn.com/Choice-Incorporating_Ebooks_into_Collection_Development.pdf)), reports research on the ways academic libraries are responding to the increased demand for digital content.

■ The **Smithsonian Libraries and Smithsonian Institution Archives** have merged to become **Smithsonian Libraries and Archives**. Through this new partnership, the Smithsonian Libraries and Archives house nearly three million library volumes in subjects ranging from art to zoology and 44,000 cubic feet of archival materials chronicling the growth and development of the Smithsonian throughout its history. The system is composed of 21 branches and employs 137 staff members

■ **Journal Retention and Needs Listing** (JRNL), software designed and hosted by the University of Florida. Scholars, records journal title retention commitments made by **Scholars Trust** libraries (the

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### News From the Field .....

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**Association of Southeastern Research Libraries, the Florida Academic Repository, and Washington Research Library Consortium**), the **Big Ten Academic Alliance** and the **Western Regional Storage Trust**. As of January 2021, these shared print programs have recorded 76,368 journal title retention commitments.

■ **The Partnership for Shared Book Collections** (<https://sharedprint.org>; The Partnership), a federation of monograph shared print programs, and the **Rosemont Shared Print Alliance** (<https://rosemontsharedprintalliance.org>; Rosemont Alliance), a collaboration of regional programs focused on preserving print serials and journals, announced the growth and expansion of collaboration in shared print in North America. The **Center for Research Libraries** (CRL) has joined both The Partnership and the Rosemont Alliance. In addition, Virginia's Academic Library Consortium, **VIVA**, has joined

The Partnership. The organization announced the selection of Sara Amato to be the organization's first program coordinator.

■ ALA Editions has published **RDA Glossary**, developed by the RDA Steering Committee (ALA Editions, 2021), ISBN 978-0-8389-9487-0, \$69.99. This glossary contains the complete terminology for *RDA* as it was constituted for the December 15, 2020 release of the *RDA Toolkit*.

■ **Congress** passed a \$1.4 trillion omnibus spending package in December. The FY21 budget, along with a \$900 billion Emergency COVID Relief spending package, includes a \$5 million increase from FY20 for the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), including nearly \$2 million for the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA).

#### Publishers and Vendors

■ **John Wiley & Sons, Inc.**

announced the acquisition of **Hindawi Limited** for a total purchase price of \$298 million. Hindawi has a portfolio of more than 200 peer-reviewed scientific, technical, and medical journals.

■ The law firm **Hagens Berman** has filed a class action suit against **Amazon**, accusing the company of colluding with the Big Five publishers to restrain price competition in the e-book market. The suit names only Amazon as a defendant, but it labels each of the Big Five publishers—Hachette, HarperCollins, Macmillan, Simon & Schuster, and Penguin Random House—as “co-conspirators” in an alleged scheme to squelch consumer price competition and keep e-book prices artificially high. Hagens Berman was the first to sue Apple and five of the then six major publishers for e-book price-fixing in 2011. The five publishers settled their claims for some \$166 million, while Apple lost at trial and paid out some \$400 million to consumers.