

Librarians and Publishers as Collaborators and Competitors

Exciting research possibilities continue to open up as scholars find more and more digital resources online and discover new ways to use emerging technologies in conducting and disseminating research and scholarship. But how freely this fount of information may flow involves questions about intellectual property rights, archiving responsibilities, and publication-outlet options—questions that confront publishers and librarians in particular. In addressing these issues, publishers and librarians complement each other's roles and functions, as they have in the past, but they are also now increasingly competing with one another as they respond to the new technologies by redefining their core missions and activities.

For example, libraries today frequently publish digital publications. HighWire Press, which publishes the journals of several important scholarly societies in the life sciences, is a Stanford University Libraries program. Other instances of library role extension range from the MIT Libraries' large, innovative initiative called DSpace, which describes itself as a "digital repository created to capture, distribute, and preserve the intellectual output of MIT," to smaller programs such as that of Dartmouth College Library, which has produced the digital publications *Linguistic Discovery* and *Latino Intersections*. Similarly, publishers increasingly use digital technologies to provide information services directly to library users through publications and services in which the library's role is often only financial.

In recognition of this evolving environment and its potential implications for the

future creation, quality, use, and persistence of scholarly information, the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR) and the Professional and Scholarly Publishing Division of the Association of American Publishers (PSP/AAP) collaboratively formed, in 2001, a working group of commercial, university, and scholarly society publishers and research, academic, public, and corporate librarians. This group's mission is to identify and clarify shared concerns as well as to promote leadership strategies that will effectively address those concerns.

The concept of this formalized group had its birth at least a decade earlier, through several informal meetings organized by CLIR, the Society for Scholarly Publishing (SSP), and the AAP, among others, and through landmark projects such as TULIP and the Red Sage Project, both of which involved publishers and libraries collaborating in the creation and implementation of digital journals and their accompanying services. Having had the fortunate opportunity to participate in both of those projects, I can personally attest to the value of library-publisher collaboration. However, in the late 1990s, when both publishers and librarians felt a sense of relief that they were heading in the right direction with the development and proliferation of digital content, their attention, in my opinion, started to focus more on competition than on collaboration. (There have been exceptions, such as the journal archiving projects funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, which involved negotiations between librarians and publishers.) Although there is value in both competition and collaboration, if sub-

stantive progress to the next level of creating digital environments for scholarship and learning is the goal, it is time for librarians and publishers to reinvestigate more rigorously the potential for combining their efforts. The CLIR and PSP/AAP working group is a very good start.

Through several meetings in New York and Washington, D.C., in 2002, the working group has agreed on the importance of exchanging views and information. Of great mutual interest and benefit has been the exchange of data collected by both librarians and publishers about the use and users of digital content. Members of the group freely shared not only use data but also information about its implications for the future development of corporate strategies and digital libraries. Strong agreement emerged that the user should be an important focus for publishers and libraries alike.

Some issues proved more difficult. Early discussions of archiving, for example, did not produce much more than an acknowledgment of strong mutual interest, the urgency of which was quickly tempered by the usual financial, political, and technological challenges. Also, not surprisingly, the issues of copyright and intellectual property were set aside for the foreseeable future. However, to be truly useful and effective within and beyond the bounds of its meeting rooms, this working group will need to set a broader and occasionally more controversial agenda, which might well lead to new collaborations modeled on the productive relationships of such earlier projects as TULIP and Red Sage. (Of value in these projects were the relationships not only between publishers and libraries but also,



in the case of TULIP, among a number of academic libraries and, in the case of Red Sage, among several publishers.)

For the future, I would like to suggest three possible areas of mutual benefit for contemplation not only by the working group and but also by the broader concerned communities: (1) leadership development; (2) business models; and (3) product development.

1. Leadership development. Among many questions that inhibit the advance of digital scholarly communication is how best to develop leaders. The library community has established several leadership institutes that focus on different levels of library organizations. Also, CLIR and Dartmouth College, with funding from

the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, are developing a Leadership Institute for New Media and Scholarly Communication. Might collaborative efforts in this area not only improve the quality of individual leaders but also increase the likelihood of collaboration between libraries and publishers in the future?

2. Business models. In the 1990s, Academic Press introduced a new model to guide its business relationships with libraries, and consortial arrangements among libraries entering into common licensing arrangements with publishers have flourished. However, many librarians and publishers feel that this business model is transitional and that our “business-as-usual” with this model is

doomed by current fiscal challenges in the short term and by the inadequacy of underlying financial structures in the long term. Is the current economic downturn, with many of the same fiscal realities that gave birth to the consortial model, an opportunity to introduce and test more sustainable models?

3. Product development. Previous projects such as TULIP and Red Sage helped to create and test the feasibility and viability of the digital journal. Today, product development has moved on to other areas, not the least important of which is the customized aggregation of information resources drawn from many individual publishers, libraries, and other sources. Publishers are looking at user movement across barriers through CrossRef, a collaborative reference linking service, and various information portals. Many libraries are actively engaged in portal development, such as the Scholar’s Portal Project of the Association of Research Libraries (ARL). Are there areas in which users could benefit from co-developments of this kind by libraries and publishers?

Risk is associated with both collaboration and competition, but different rewards usually result from these differing strategies. At this stage in the development of digital libraries, it would truly be useful for libraries and publishers to face any possible risk associated with mutual collaboration for the rewards of increased access to knowledge and the advancement of digital scholarship to the next level.

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