

Publishers and Librarians: New Dialogues in Challenging Times

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Viewpoints

Publishers and Librarians: New Dialogues in Challenging Times

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Over the years, publishers and librarians have often found themselves involved in a somewhat contentious relationship, with librarians sometimes seeing publishers as adversaries. More than a dozen years have passed since open access was proposed as a possible solution for the library, with new "free" journals and changing scholarly communication paradigms proposed as offering potential relief for dwindling budgets. Along with other forces, open access may actually have been the motivator for publishers, both commercial and society, to examine their relationships not only with their authors, but with librarians. The pervasiveness of Internet use has transformed both libraries and the publishing world, and these groups now find themselves with common concerns as well as some superordinate goals. Issues such as the future of print journals, use of social networking tools to entice customers, effects of massive book digitization projects, preservation initiatives, partnerships with Google, federal open access mandates, copyright and plagiarism concerns, and a variety of data dilemmas are just a few examples of areas where librarians and publishers see their worlds colliding. E-science and the coming "data deluge" will force us all to confront the issue of supplementary materials to scholarly works. Common problems can lead to shared solutions. Since collaboration and teamwork are popular buzzwords in both worlds, there may be new opportunity and value in the continued enhancement of the relationship between librarians and publishers.

This past year, it was my good fortune to seek out one of the liaison positions that ACRL STS (Science and Technology Section) makes available. I had become interested in the relationship between the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) and JSTOR. The withdrawal of the AAAS flagship journal *Science* from JSTOR seemed a bellwether event to many in the science librarian community. I attended the AAAS conference in February 2008, where a group of librarians was able to meet with a representative of AAAS to discuss the JSTOR issue. Librarians at the conference found themselves involved in many interesting discussions with a variety of stakeholders.

Following this conference, I attended the Society for Scholarly Publishing's 30th anniversary meeting in May 2008, where many sessions focused on topics of common interest. SSP extends librarians a reduced rate to their conferences, and the mix of librarians and scholarly publishers made for a very stimulating and interesting conference. We discussed e-books, the use of

supplemental data in articles, libraries dropping print journals, and open access mandates. More general interest topics such as the history of the information age, the future of publishing, and artificial intelligence provided food for thought. The mix of publishers and librarians at informal roundtable lunches and breakfasts provided us all with opportunities to discuss the intertwined future of both libraries and the scholarly publishing business.

Along with other librarians, this year I attended a meeting of the Association of American Publishers, Professional/Scholarly Publishing Division (AAP/PSP) in New York, which focused on the methods and tools that librarians use to carry out journal cancellation projects. The featured speakers were librarians, and again it was clear that this information exchange led to a better understanding of the challenges faced by both parties. The publishers in attendance gained some knowledge about how libraries assess their collections. Although it was a short afternoon meeting in my local area, interest in the topic drew a full room of participants and calls from members for more meetings about topics of common interest. Another recent AAP/PSP conference focused on various metrics and their use in collection assessment. Certainly, librarians will want to know how publishers view available metrics and how they might alter their business plans around such measures, even as librarians are working to use the same metrics for other purposes. Sharing that conversation among librarians and publishers may lead to a mutually beneficial idea of the value of various new and established metrics.

We are seeing increasing collaboration in publishers' use of library advisory boards and ongoing librarian focus groups. This type of more formalized activity is a welcome addition to the usual conference booth interactions or in-person library visits by sales representatives. The ACRL EBSS section has benefited from a continuing relationship with the American Psychological Association (APA). Members of the APA's publishing initiatives divisions have been invited to attend various ALA conference meetings to share perspectives and ask questions. Often, these meetings of behavioral sciences librarians with APA representatives result in enhancements to products that we all use in our daily work with patrons.

Not to be left out of this new collaborative environment, the commercial publishers also provide venues for exchange of ideas with the librarian community. For instance, I have learned a great deal about a variety of pertinent topics while attending Elsevier's "Library Connect" seminars. Presentations by the publishers' researchers as well as by librarians have allowed me to learn about trends in worldwide information production, as well as how academic libraries are responding. Informal exchange of ideas at these sessions has been valuable to my work as a behavioral sciences librarian.

ACRL's emphasis on liaison work with organizations outside of the library world has created a useful conduit for discussion, collaboration, and reporting back to libraries. Resulting conference reports prepared by librarians can be found in such outlets as the STS web site, as well as in journals such as "Library Hi Tech News." We are seeing the evidence of greater interest in collaboration in the large numbers of attendees at traditional meeting places like the Charleston Conference. NASIG, the North American Serials Interest Group, is an independent organization that welcomes both publisher and librarian members, and is devoted to fostering communication among all people interested in the world of serials.

In attending meetings of other organizations, I have been surprised to find so many other front-line academic librarians. I have also been surprised at how easy and productive it has been to converse with those "on the other side." I have developed a new interest in the increasing intersection of librarianship and publishing. We all share the missions of producing, certifying, collecting, disseminating, and preserving the research community's scholarly output. Greater discussion and collaboration with publishers toward a common public good can be a positive outcome of the tensions inherent in the rapid changes taking place in the "information age," and an interesting expansion of the roles of academic librarians.

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