

Editorial

The Future of Scholarship

One of my editorial themes over the last five years has been the need for librarians to change to meet the challenges of a significantly different future for scholarship and thus for library service. Last May, the Research Libraries Group sponsored a small symposium entitled "Scholarship in the New Information Environment" at Harvard Law School. The speakers at this conference inspired me to comment again about the new environment for scholarship.

Scholarly information: Stanley Chodorow, provost of the University of Pennsylvania, predicted the continuation of print for a long, long time, but the end of an era when scholarly text was fixed. He believes that multiple versions of scholarly works with annotations of different scholars will exist simultaneously. Scholars, with the help of specialist librarians, will have to select among them. Toni Carbo Bearman, dean of the School of Library and Information Science at the University of Pittsburgh, also envisioned a hypertextual form where fixity no longer operates. She thinks that the idea of literacy will have to be replaced by mediacy, an understanding of thought through media other than the printed page. Hal Varian, Reuben Kempf professor of economics at the University of Michigan, outlined the advantages of price discrimination in valuing information; he predicted that scholars will pay for information but that the costs for text will be negligible. Douglas Greenberg, president of the Chicago Historical Society, predicted a continuing expansion of scholarly interest with an increasing range of methodological approaches. Supporting all these new methodologies challenges libraries and societies that store source

materials. More and more institutions will begin to charge for the use of their unique resources.

Library roles: As the library presents itself on each scholar's desk top, its need for a central geographical place on campus vanishes. Chodorow thinks materials not converted to electronic form can be stored anywhere and made available only as needed. Ross Atkinson, associate university librarian for collection development, technical services, and preservation at Cornell University, described the paper library as a drought with librarians as children of the drought in comparison with the electronic library which will provide a flood of unmanaged information. He reconceptualizes the library as an institution that identifies materials along a source/needs continuum. The library will ensure access to all materials, but the speed of delivery to the patron will vary. The library will add value to certain materials by creating a control zone in which some materials are available locally, some are quickly produced for less frequent use, and others take even longer to access.

Librarian roles: Chodorow believes that librarians will be recognized as information specialists; they will be jointly trained in information retrieval and in a subject discipline to navigate through the broad electronic information landscape. Atkinson reiterated his idea that the library should become a scholarly publisher for nontrade monographs, and Csewlaw J.Grycz, executive director of the Wladyslaw Poniecki Charitable Foundation, noted the need to add value, rather than just cost, in both the editing and review process and in the storage and



retrieval process. Bearman and Atkinson both discussed the continuing need for filtering and quality control. Varian viewed the librarian as the person making the decisions about how to maximize the amount of quality information that could be purchased with the materials budget.

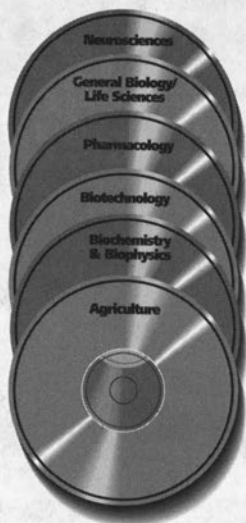
Library cooperation: Atkinson allowed his *Doppelgänger* to speak to the less idealized explanations for the failure of efforts at cooperation. Head librarians flourish by maximizing the libraries' share of the academic institution's budget, and collection managers measure success through maximization of local holdings, which has been a key determinant of large library rankings. In this environment, spending local monies to meet national needs is virtually impossible. Similarly, the university sells itself on the reputation of its faculty, who are often more concerned with their own prestige than with dissemination of information. The current system supports all these agendas excellently. In this environment, talk about cooperation is far more effective than real cooperation. Atkinson noted that the Association of Research Libraries' directors could end the serials cost crisis by each requesting a thirty percent reduction in materials budget and five years of flat funding. The faculty would be in an uproar because of the potential damage to their reputations, and all the directors would be fired.

Other realistic observations: Chodorow, a scholar of medieval canon law, spoke about writing books for nine or ten or perhaps only six colleagues. Such works, which have always been subsi-

dized by library purchases, should not be produced in the same way as the works of Danielle Steele. Grycz and others noted the probable triumph of the entertainment industry in determining the intellectual property laws of the United States and hoped for some special provisions for the scholarly communications system. In response to Paul Mosher's question about the continued viability of the Chatauqua model (lifelong learning for the common person), the panel questioned whether states are willing to fund a first-class educational institution. As education competes with prisons and health care, support is eroding.

Libraries and librarians are part of a system designed to serve a lifelong learning model for higher education. The ideal behind that model was a democratization of learning; knowledge was a public good that should be made freely available to all. Now that whole system and its underlying ideal are being challenged. Librarians must make a stronger commitment to their role in the creation of scholarship—as scholarly publishers, organizers, indexers, and information specialists. Further, students are accustomed to doing research in a collection that has been screened. As these students begin to use resources on the Internet and to work with multiple versions rather than with a fixed text, the library's instructional responsibilities intensify and proliferate. The digital library may cede its place in the geographical center of campus but specialist librarians should not cede their place at the center of the production and interpretation of scholarly information.

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