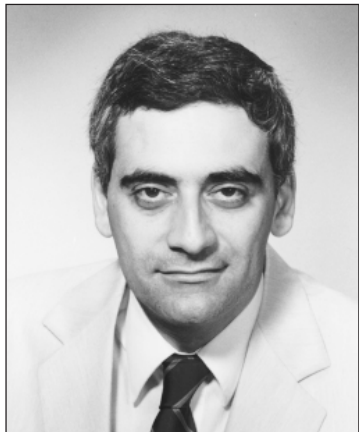


■ MOVEABLE TYPE. ■

The Newsletter of the Mark O. Hatfield Library, Willamette University

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■ SPRING 1999



William Miller

Electronic Access: The End of the Traditional Library?

By William Miller

FROM OREGON TO FLORIDA, ACADEMIC librarians field questions about electronic information. These questions often reveal basic misconceptions about the nature of this new medium, its relationship to traditional printed materials and the role libraries play in teaching and research. These questions include:

- Why can't you just digitize everything?
- Isn't it all electronic now?
- Why do we need to support libraries now that everything is free of charge on the web?

These well-intended, but rather naïve, questions show that many people do not fully understand the way that publishers, libraries, teachers and scholars work.

To the casual observer, there appears to be an enormous amount of information available free of charge on the web. There is so much of it, in fact, that they cannot imagine the need for anything more. Unfortunately, most of what students and faculty need is not available online, or is available only for a hefty charge. The fact that we can read some of today's *New York Times* on the web does not mean that we can read last month's or last year's issues without someone first paying a fee. What is available on a library's website therefore may be very different from what is available through America on Line. Librarians spend considerable amounts of money to provide students and faculty with research-quality electronic information that is not otherwise available.

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Electronic Resources Collection Development: It's a Group Thing

By Ford C. Schmidt

With the move from print to electronic resources, the process of evaluating, selecting and negotiating the acquisition of new products has become increasingly complex. Electronic resources are reviewed and selected increasingly, and a reference database collection once managed easily by a single librarian can no longer be handled by one individual. The expertise this process requires extends across traditional library departmental boundaries. Today, knowledge and background are required in areas that normally fall within technical services, public services and systems.

Three years ago, the librarians of the Hatfield Library, as part of an organization move toward functional groups and planning committees, created an Electronic Resource Group (ERG). The ERG was charged with five basic responsibilities:

- Creation and maintenance of a collection development policy for electronic information resources
- Planning and administration of the electronic resources budget
- Selection of electronic resources, in consultation with the librarians with collection development and selection responsibilities and with faculty
- Monitoring developments in electronic publishing
- Recommending purchases, policies and budgets to the library's Administrative Group

The ERG is composed of those librarians most involved with electronic information resources, and those with the background knowledge necessary to carry out its charge. Initially, the group consisted of the head of reference services, the periodicals and government documents librarian, the science librarian, and the systems librarian. As time passed, and as the group's purview came to include that of collection development and budget administration, the systems librarian opted to act in an advisory role.

The early meetings of the group focused on organization, policy writing and administrative details. Once a collection policy, a selection procedure, a criteria checklist and a budget

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24-Hour Study Room Committee Formed

IN RESPONSE TO STUDENT COMMENTS RECEIVED during the library's recent self study, a committee has been formed and charged with making the 24-hour study room more inviting and user friendly. Members include library staff, a student representative and a representative from Student Affairs. The group is considering adding a vending machine that offers yogurt, fresh fruit and other healthy options; creating a comfortable lounge area with a rug, couch and overstuffed chairs; installing better lighting; and enclosing the public telephone to reduce noise. The committee is also exploring the possibility of installing window coverings, replacing existing tables and chairs, and

adding study carrels for individual study. Members hope to make their recommendations by spring break. ■

Inside This Issue...

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- From Teaching to Learning
- Who Owns "The Book of Life"
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- The Oberlin Group

It is true that more and more information is becoming available electronically. But, libraries are the only agencies within academia that normally pay to make it available. The library is also the only agency that regularly teaches students the use of both the print and the electronic materials we purchase, the use of the Internet, and how to distinguish between the nuggets of true value and the fool's gold which abounds in cyberspace.

Will we ever be able to discard our traditional print collections because everything is available electronically? Not likely. The bulk of the printed material that has accumulated since Gutenberg's time probably never will be digitized, simply because it is not economically feasible. A teenager can mount a website quickly and easily (and then walk away from it without consequences), but high-quality information, reliably available over time, is expensive to produce and maintain. Publishing is a business and if publishers cannot make a profit, they simply cease to publish.

Why can't libraries digitize their own collections? Because the cost of doing so is prohibitive. Most librarians cannot afford to inventory their collections, let alone digitize them. Even if funds were available, we would still be prevented from digitizing our collections by the existing copyright laws. That is why the Library of Congress' American Memory Project is digitizing primarily old, out-of-copyright materials. Projects such as this, although modest in scope, nevertheless cost millions of dollars.

How much information is currently available electronically? No one really knows, but our best guess is 15 percent of all information. This figure will increase, but it is by no means certain that any particular bit of information will remain accessible unless it is archived by librarians. Libraries acquire and preserve for the future as well as for the present; publishers create to sell, and have no long-term commitment to access unless it is profitable.

Academic libraries will continue to serve as the agencies that acquire, store and archive scholarly information, make it available, and help students and faculty to use it. Academic libraries will continue to play a central role in the life of their institutions, changing as the world changes. But, like the Roman god Janus, they will face backward as well as forward in order to retain and care for what can be found nowhere else. ■

William Miller is director of libraries, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, and 1996-97 president of the Association of College and Research Libraries. An earlier version of this piece appeared in Library Issues.

A View from the Library

Fishing for Information:

Common Misperceptions About the Web

By Larry R. Oberg

A number of commonly held misperceptions about the web haunt the lives of librarians: "Everything you need is on the web." "There's nothing but crap on the web." "Students don't use the library anymore." "Students don't *need* to use the library anymore." The implications that flow from these quite mistaken assumptions risk negatively affecting campus policy and the educational process itself.

"The truth is that good information is available on the web. For academics to get to the best of it, however, the library has to pay."



The most common misperception — the one that cuts to the heart of the research process — is the idea that "everything" is available on the web. Equally pernicious is its negative corollary, the assumption that the web contains nothing of value. The truth is that good information is increasingly, often exclusively, available on the web. For academics to get to the best of it, however, the library has to pay.

In order better to understand the web, I recently searched for information on salmon (an appropriate Pacific Northwest topic, I felt). First I gave Yahoo a shot, instantly pulling up a vast quantity of material suitable for a wide range of age and interest levels. My retrieval included outdoor recreation reports; information on the rock band "Salmon" (with bios, pictures and sound); real estate investment opportunities in Idaho's Salmon River

area; recipes for cooking salmon; etc. In brief, I retrieved a vast jumble of materials, only some of which, I reckoned, might be appropriate to college-level research.

Next, I searched "salmon" in *Expanded Academic ASAP*, the full-text general index that is available from our library web page, the WebStation. The materials I retrieved here, scholarly articles in academic journals, were carefully organized under such headings as "salmon fisheries," and "salmon industry." I knew that the Hatfield librarians had subscribed to this index with our school's needs in mind, so I felt confident that the articles it contained would satisfy student research requirements.

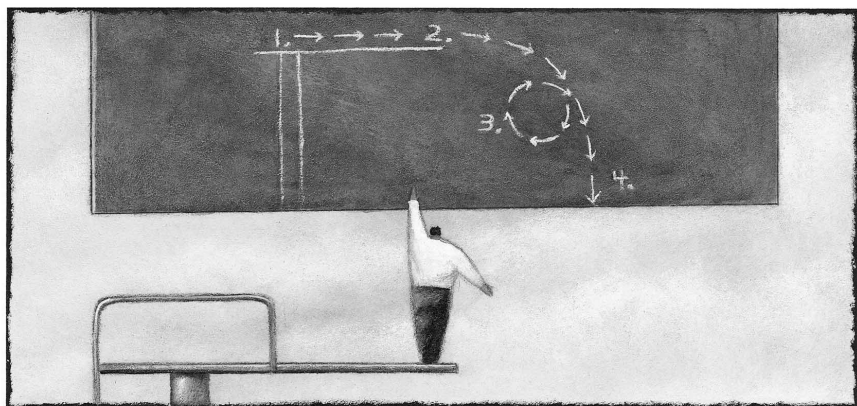
These searches, both conducted "on the web," revealed the existence of two vastly different data sets with little overlap. The Yahoo data set was larger, non-selective and aimed at a general audience. Although it lacked quality control, it was available without charge. The library data set, pre-selected by the database vendor, included scholarly, mostly peer-reviewed, journal articles written for an academic audience. A high level of quality control ensures the integrity of this data set, but this is expensive. Access is paid for by the library and, under the terms of our contract, limited to those with a Willamette University account.

Do students still use the library? Indeed, they do. At least, here at Willamette they do. Our gate count — a record of the number of people who enter the library — has remained constant over the past five years. And our circulation statistics — the number of books and other materials patrons charge out — have increased dramatically, all but doubling between 1987-88 and 1997-98. The use of the library continues to grow, despite the increasing availability of web-based networked resources and Willamette University researchers' growing dependence upon them.

But, do students still *need* to use the library? Indeed, they do. Most of the information they require is available *only* in the library or on its WebStation. And when they access the WebStation from their residence hall or home, they are still using the library, even if web access absolves them of the need to go there in person. The library and its web site are unique gateways to academic information essential to student and faculty researchers that *cannot* be obtained using the commercial web search engines.

To say that something is available "on the web" tells us precious little. This is the electronic equivalent to saying that something is available "in print." The difference is one of medium. Students should still be directed to the library. There they will find a unique and appropriate collection of materials not available elsewhere, whether that collection is available in print or on the web. ■

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More Than Just Labels:

From Teaching Library to Learning Library

By Steven J. Bell

Want to enrage an academic library colleague? It's easy. Just argue that he or she, or their library, is not a part of the teaching process. Whether owing to a lack of official faculty credentials, the absence of a for-credit library course or simply the lack of a platform equal to faculty from which to educate students, it may indeed appear that library professionals do not teach. Any serious proponent or practitioner of bibliographic instruction would find such charges ludicrous. Academic librarians at institutions like Willamette University play an essential role in teaching students research and library skills. Now that many institutions are rethinking teaching and focusing on student learning, it may be time for academic librarians to reconsider their roles in the educational process.

Teaching and instruction are longtime missions of academic institutions. Consider the old axiom that colleges are in the business of buying scholarship and selling teaching. But a landmark article that appeared in the November/December 1995 issue of *Change* magazine began a movement to rethink this fundamental premise upon which the education industry is built. Barr and Tabb, authors of *From Teaching to Learning – A New Paradigm for Undergraduate Education*, suggested that the educational enterprise should focus on learning rather than teaching. In the learning paradigm, the institutional mission focuses on producing learning by every student, using whatever means works best. This philosophy is a guiding principle of the seamless learning environment. The library contributes to the core mission of the institution by emphasizing the value of resources that exist both inside and outside the classroom, and it may well gain more recognition as a learning library than it ever did as a teaching library.

Seamless learning is not only a partial reaction to the weaknesses of teaching-centered education, but also an outcome of the "invisible hand" of economics. Employers want knowledge workers, employees who can use information to obtain new skills and apply what is learned in productive ways. The traditional teaching paradigm focuses on short-term memorization of facts, and it rarely encourages students to discover, synthesize and apply classroom material to solving emerging problems. Traditional teaching is not producing the type of worker that industry wants. The creation of such individuals, educational institutions are realizing, is not the sole responsibility of the teacher, and will be possible only when education extends to all campus venues.

A learning library can become a critical part of a seamless learning environment. For that to happen, librarians must acknowledge that their facilities are labs for situational learning. They also need to understand that library skills must be internalized through deep learning, so that students can make use of them both in and out of the library. Situated learning occurs when knowledge is gained through practice, as when an apprentice learns a trade. Deep learning is transformational. Unlike surface learning, exemplified by the quick digestion of facts that are soon forgotten after testing, deep learning focuses on the attainment of knowledge and understanding. In a learning library, bibliographic instructors can create practical situations that enable students to understand why they are learning the research process and how to learn more on their own.

The challenge is to go beyond traditional approaches to library instruction that are oriented towards surface learning, and adapt them for the new learning environment. Recognizing that students are more likely to internalize research skills when properly situated is one way to do this. That situation is rarely a regularly scheduled bibliographic instruction session in the library, but more likely a dorm room at 1 a.m. while the student is remotely connected to the library's databases preparing a research paper that is due in the next day or two. A college learning community model at the University of Pennsylvania is structured to allow students to get assistance at the time and place when deeper learning happens, giving them access to a library-trained peer advisor who can provide research assistance. Other library systems are experimenting with virtual reference desks to facilitate out-of-class learning. Available around the clock, these services provide library assistance when students are situated for learning.

Is this all just a matter of semantics? If students become proficient at using library resources does it really matter whether the library director describes his or her organization as a teaching or a learning library? We can all agree that those are merely labels. What counts is creating a vision of and adherence to a philosophy that guides actions. In a true seamless learning environment, librarians can find a place for both surface and deep learning. Which end of the spectrum is selected depends on the answer to the question, "What do we want students to learn about library research?" There are times when all a student needs to know is which button to click. At other times, however, situational learning can help a student to understand the conceptual foundations of research skills and will result in self-directed and lifelong knowledge acquisition and processing ability.

Perhaps the answer to the question of how librarians should describe their instructional programming is to shift the focus from a single descriptive label to a learning environment adept at providing a range of skills along a spectrum bounded by surface and deep learning. For lack of a better term, call it a learning library, which is really not a physical entity at all but a process for educating students about research skills. This process enables students to learn how to think about and use information resources proficiently. They may learn this from a professional librarian, a student assistant or in team efforts with faculty, and they may learn it in the library training room or the lounge of a dormitory. As a part of an seamless learning effort, the library creates an environment that encourages and supports all forms of opportunities for learning. This is how we can best help our institutions build learning communities that prepare students for the challenges of the new millennium. ■

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Alumni Workshops to be Offered

WILLAMETTE UNIVERSITY'S ACADEMIC YEAR concludes in May, but the library staff continues working through the summer. This June, the staff will be offering a workshop for alumni entitled *Old and New: The Mark O. Hatfield Library, 1999*. Designed to introduce alums to the facilities and resources, the workshop will provide them with a chance to reacquaint themselves with the Hatfield Library, the University and each other. Two sessions of the hour and a half workshop will be offered.

InfoStations Multiply

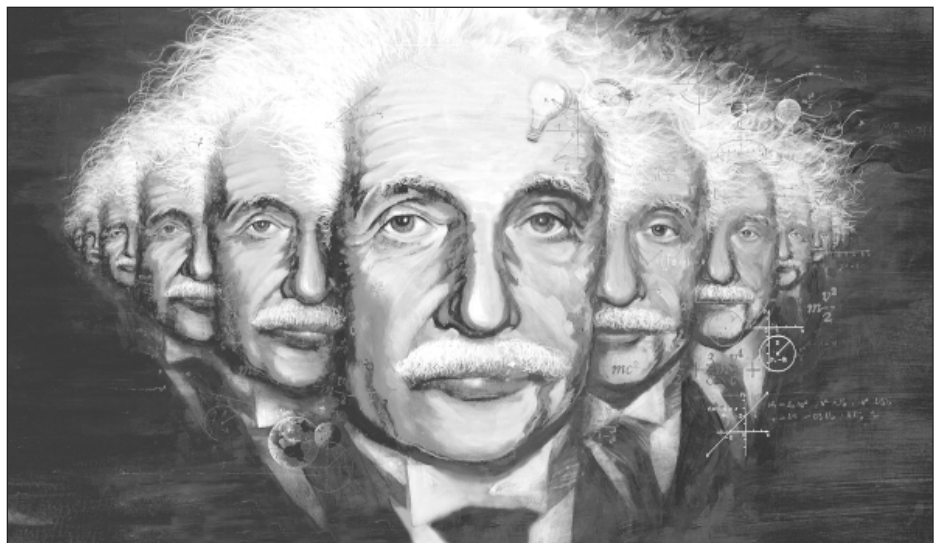
IN RESPONSE TO SUGGESTIONS FROM LAST SPRING'S library self-study survey, a new cluster of four InfoStations has been added to the reference area. The InfoStations have been enormously popular with users and the need for more was clearly indicated. Additional furniture was required to house the new InfoStations and a new "pod" was built based on the original design. Adjustments were also made to the original furniture. Counter space has been increased to provide more workspace and greater distance between users and the large 21-inch monitors. These changes should shorten the occasional wait for an InfoStation and provide a more comfortable experience when using them.

Library Internships Expanding

THIS SPRING, THE LIBRARIANS OF THE HATFIELD Library are serving as mentors to the second library intern in as many years. The internship came about in recognition of the importance of promoting career-related work and study opportunities for students considering librarianship as a profession, and will involve the intern in practical experiences related to various facets of library work. Projects planned for the current intern include the creation of a subject web page for theatre and dance, a collection evaluation of the plant science subject areas, the processing of the new Northwest special collection, as well as a yet to be defined systems related project.

Who Owns "The Book of Life"

By Myles W. Jackson



In 1989 the U.S. government decided to fund the sequencing of the entire human genome. The Department of Energy and the National Institutes of Health would receive a total of \$3 billion over a 15-year period and employ hundreds of scientists at scores of institutions across the country in order to catalogue some 3×10^9 base pairs of DNA. The genomic task is a daunting one: to map all 80 to 100,000 human genes. The project's *raison d'être* is the hope that eventually new drugs can be developed either to neutralize the genetic sequences of infectious diseases, such as HIV, or to excise the mutant genes and insert the healthy, wild-type varieties.

This exciting era of Big Science — the cooperation between universities, industry and government in research — has given rise to an array of cutting-edge technologies that are needed to process the massive amount of information generated by the Human Genome Project (henceforth, HGP). Indeed, if the base pairs of DNA were printed, one human's *opus magnus* would comprise over 200 volumes, each the size of the Manhattan telephone book. The analogy between the human genome and a book is a striking one. The genome has been referred to as "The Book of Life," "The Book of Man[!]," and even "The Bible." The very vocabulary used by molecular biologists reflects the information age: "Data banks of DNA," "sets of instructions," "decoding the text," and "programming sequences." The California Institute of Technology's Jet Propulsion Laboratory is busily inventing computer programs that will both store and compare large sequences of DNA. Hence, just as many classic works can now be accessed on the World Wide Web, molecular geneticist Walter Gilbert introduces his public lectures by producing a compact disk from his pocket and, only somewhat ironically, announcing, "This is you." (Nelkin and Lindee, *The DNA Mystique* (1995), p.7.) Laboratories at Caltech and Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory are currently producing the world's most advanced microchip, six to eight of which will be able to store all 3×10^9 base pairs of a human's DNA. All the chips can be scanned within hours.

Although the analogy between the information found in texts and that encoded in human DNA is intriguing, crucial ethical differences abound. As the author of a forthcoming book, I harbor the admittedly narcissistic hope that many people will wish to read it. But contrary to the self-serving desires connected to my book, I shudder at the thought that my genetic sequence may be made available to prying eyes. Although the application of technology to molecular biology has been an enormous boon to the HGP, the public needs to be aware of the ramifications. Big business is changing the content and the conduct of the scientific enterprise, for better and for worse.

As a result, in part, of the research behind the HGP, molecular biologists have now identified a large percentage of human genes. DNA sequences responsible for such horrific diseases as Huntington's Disease, sickle cell anemia and PKU have now been located and identified. These breakthroughs represent the first vital step toward a future genetic therapy of disease, and they have made possible a series of genetic tests that reveal whether genes have been passed down to developing embryos. But these tests have also been used as a sinister tool of discrimination. For example, several major insurance companies require the genetic testing of at-risk clients. The presence of certain genetic markers, even for diseases which strike individuals late in life, can be cause for either higher premiums or outright denial of coverage.

The skeptical, patriotic reader might be reluctant to give credence to such “un-American” behavior. But legislation dealing with insurance companies is the concern of the individual states, and 16 states have no laws whatsoever dealing with the privacy of one’s genetic makeup. To his credit, President Bill Clinton has supported a federal bill, sponsored in the fall of 1995 by Republican Senator Robert Bennett of Utah and Democratic Senator Patrick Leahy of Vermont, prohibiting such blatant discrimination by insurance companies. But due to various pressures from these firms, the bill has undergone various changes and still has not been passed.

Although insurance companies are keen to have their financial interests bolstered by access to the latest scientific advances, not all companies are interested in sharing scientific information. Because of the obvious medical application of the HGP research, pharmaceutical companies have a vested (or perhaps “invested”) interest in the technology generated by molecular biologists. Biotech firms are setting the research pace. The molecular biologist and entrepreneur, J. Craig Venter, serves as a prime example. After departing the National Institutes of Health for greener pastures, he became the director of The Institute for Genomic Research (TIGR), which enjoyed the financial backing of the late Wallace Steinberg, former chairperson of Healthcare Investment Corporation. Steinberg spent millions funding TIGR and its sister company, the Human Genome Sciences (HGS), which works on the medical aspects of the research performed by TIGR. (Belkin, “Splice Einstein” [1998], p.30.) By 1994 TIGR and HGS had found 35,000 genes, nearly half of the genes present in the human genome. Why are businesses such as TIGR and HGS interested in finding so many genes? The answer is as simple as it is chilling; they wish to patent them. Over the past four years, the HGP is becoming increasingly privatized. Up to this point, the United States Patent and Trademark Office has issued patents for over 1,800 genes, and although most of them are plant genes, there has been an explosion in the number of patent applications for human genes over the past two years. The ethical uncertainties and implications are both clear and

disturbing. What is the worth of a human gene? Why should a company be allowed to patent a gene that most, if not all, people possess?

Another less obvious point concerning the HGP needs to be raised. As a result of the interplay between science and industry, the actual conduct of the scientific enterprise has changed. Ever since the existence of France’s 17th-century Republic of Letters, science has been predicated on the unrestricted access to information. Secrecy is anathema to scientific knowledge. But since the law treats genes as commercial

products, much profit is at stake for biotech firms working on the HGP. Company secrets ensure financial advantage over pesky competitors. Unfortunately, science is succumbing to the whims of industrial practices. Two examples will suffice to illustrate this regrettable situation. As director of TIGR, Venter is required under contract with Steinberg to show his results only to HGS for the first six months. This period of exclusion allows HGS to obtain an insurmountable lead over competing companies. In addition, Venter is not permitted to publish his research in scholarly journals until one full year after his discovery, enabling HGS to apply for the relevant patent. (Ibid.) The pharmaceutical company, Amgen, has paid Rockefeller University \$20 million to obtain exclusive rights to a gene thought to treat obesity. (Ibid., p. 58.)

The once impenetrable boundaries between public and private knowledge are now, at best, semi-permeable. Big Science, in a very real sense, has redefined the function of the author. Ownership no longer resides with the inventor or discoverer of scientific knowledge, but rather with the financial apparatus that supports the research. ■

FURTHER READING:

Lisa Belkin, “Splice Einstein and Sammy Glic. Add a Little Magellan,” *New York Times Magazine*, 23 August 1998.
Daniel J. Kevles and Leroy Hood, eds., *The Code of Codes. Scientific and Social Issues in the Human Genome Project* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992).
Dorothy Nelkin and M. Susan Lindee, *The DNA Mystique. The Gene as a Cultural Icon* (New York: W. H. Freeman Company, 1995).

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Library Scholarship is Recommended

A RECENTLY APPOINTED COMMITTEE has recommended that the Hatfield Library establish a scholarship for currently enrolled Willamette students or alumni who have chosen to pursue a career in librarianship. The scholarship, to be funded initially by the Friends of the Library, will be called the Mark O. Hatfield Library Scholarship in Library and Information Science. It aims to reward exceptional students or alumni who have been accepted into a graduate program in the United States or Canada that is accredited by the American Library Association. Committee members Dayna Collins, Maresa Kirk, Gary Klein, Linda Maddux, and Larry Oberg, are now turning their attention to establishing a timetable, criteria, policy, and procedures to govern the awarding of the scholarship. The new scholarship, the amount of which has been set at five hundred dollars, will be awarded annually.

Technology Planning Committee Created

THIS FALL, A NEW UNIVERSITY-WIDE COMMITTEE structure was created to keep under review important areas and issues involving the uses of technology at Willamette University. The new University Committee for Technology Policy and Planning (UCTPP) includes faculty, staff and student members and will recommend new policies and procedures. Its subcommittees will tackle such vexing issues as electronic communication, University web policies and procedures, hardware allocation and support, the administrative-faculty technology interface and classroom applications of technology. The subcommittees of the UCTPP have all met at least twice and have prepared a list of priority issues for further study. The Policy Committee, composed of the chairs of the subcommittees, is currently reviewing the major findings of the subcommittees and preparing to review the University’s existing policies in these areas. Among items high on the agenda are the University web page, allocation of hardware, access to the computing system, e-mail, and equipping classrooms for teaching with technology. Formation of the UCTPP represents the first step towards a community-wide consideration of where we are in the use of technology, where we wish to be, and how we will manage to get there. The process promises to be engaging and valuable.

Creating Databases Presentation

BILL KELM, HATFIELD LIBRARY SYSTEMS support specialist, presented a well received session on creating databases at the November 9, 1998, meeting of the Northwest Innovative (III) Users Group Meeting held at Saint Martin's College in Lacey, Washington. Kelm's session focussed on the Hatfield Library's recently created alternative to III's expensive "scoping" mechanism. By combining features of the III system with a new product, WebSuite, a searchable web interface of all videorecordings held by the library was constructed. Updated weekly, the new database functions as a catalog, and is publicly searchable from the catalog's web interface. A database that will list the library's print journal subscriptions and online full-text journals is now under construction. The new video database can be accessed at <http://library.willamette.edu/wulib/video/>.

1997-98 Annual Report Now Available

THE MARK O. HATFIELD LIBRARY RECENTLY published its second Annual Report, covering the period 1997-98. The report includes information on library services and activities, goals and objectives, a statistical portrait of the library and a review of the professional activities of the staff. Those who wish a copy of the Annual Report should contact Larry R. Oberg at [<loberg@willamette.edu>](mailto:loberg@willamette.edu).

MOVEABLE TYPE

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plan had been created, the ERG began building a collection of electronic resources to serve the library's mission of "creating and providing the tools that enable access to universal knowledge."

The ERG's major areas of responsibility became the electronic resources budget, both new budget requests and the administration of the existing budget; resource selection; and contract and price negotiation.

When deciding whether to acquire specific electronic resources, we continued to use the traditional collection development criteria, such as intellectual content, frequency of publication and the timeliness of information. However, we soon discovered that we also needed to think beyond these increasingly restrictive criteria.

Technical considerations were a major factor that influenced database selection. Could we provide the technology necessary to access and make available these resources? Was one access method preferable to another, and why? With new networking possibilities, we wanted to provide access to our remote users, both on and off campus. Now we had to take into account such questions as archaic equipment and the variety of platforms (DOS, Windows, Macintosh, Unix, etc.) in use by our clients.

Vendor selection became an issue. Generally, a print resource was available from one publisher only. Now we had a choice of electronic vendors, at least for some databases, and while the content might be similar, or indeed identical, search engines, interfaces and ease of use might vary.

"Because of the high cost of some databases, evaluation of existing subscriptions needed to be ongoing."



How these products would be used was also a consideration. The only prerequisite required for the use of print resources is basic literacy; using electronic resources requires more. It takes time for a patron to become familiar with the basic functions of a database. The impact this has on reference and instruction has to be taken into account, especially in regard to the different levels of computer competency held by the library's

users. Upon occasion, the decision not to purchase a database has been based on the fact that the database interface was too opaque for the general user to handle without extensive instruction.

Contract and price negotiations have become an important part of the group's responsibility. Our generalist inclinations have rapidly evolved into specialized knowledge as specialization becomes critical to maintaining currency in the rapidly changing world of libraries.

In addition to initiating new electronic subscriptions, we also deal with the renewal of previously existing subscriptions. Although this is often an automatic process similar to the renewal of a periodical subscription, we do not have the convenience of a subscription service to handle the more routine aspects of renewal.

Because of the relatively high cost of some databases, evaluation of existing subscriptions needed to be ongoing. Was a particular database needed, or was it duplicative or redundant? Was it used? Was there an upgrade, either in method of access (e.g., CD-ROM to web), in content, or in interface? Was there a better alternative? We continue to consider these issues because of budget limitations, but also to provide the best, most focused electronic collection possible.

Membership in different library consortia has proven beneficial, but has not eliminated the work that the ERG does. Instead of conducting contract and price negotiations directly with the database vendors, we now often negotiate with other consortia members our institutional price and the amount of access we need. Centralized contract negotiation, whether local, statewide, or regional, will be addressed eventually by others, but individual libraries will benefit from the expertise of ERG-like groups in their dealings with centralized negotiators or agencies.

In addition to the activities described, the ERG deals with other issues arising from the electronic landscape. How do we handle full text? Will the content of a given electronic publication be available in perpetuity, or does the backfile disappear when the current subscription ends? In either case, how safe is it to cancel the print version of our electronic resources?

The Educational Resources Group provides us with the necessary flexibility to take advantage of time-sensitive consortial and vendor offers without last minute scrambling. It also provides us with a stable, organized method of administering a growing electronics budget, overseeing the selection and acquisition of new resources, and evaluating existing resources. For the Hatfield librarians, it has proven to be a valuable tool for defining and managing an important area of activity. ■

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The Case for Collaboration

by Terry Metz

Some observers predict a gradual convergence, if not the outright merger, of academic libraries and campus computing organizations, particularly as the boundary between information technology and information content blurs. Regardless of the outcome, library and computing center employees' perceptions of one another can influence, for better or worse, how effectively these units collaborate.

Psychologists identify at least three factors that impede collaboration among groups: 1) social distinctions, 2) salary differentiation and 3) subcultural differences. All three factors are at play among librarians and computing staff.

Computing staff come from a variety of educational and experiential backgrounds; they do not share a common professional preparation. In contrast, librarians are acculturated into a common set of values during their professional preparation.

Library and computing center personnel have different salary and responsibility gradations. Benefit packages may differ, for example, faculty status for librarians but not for computing staff.

Finally, more than two cultures exist. Among campus computing staff, academic and administrative employees may have different outlooks, as may hardware and software support specialists. User services staff in computing organizations have different cultures than programmers or technicians. Libraries, too, have a long history of cultural differences between public services and technical services staff, and between librarians and support staff.

A recent survey of librarians and computing staff demonstrates that widely varying perceptions are held by each group.

LIBRARIANS' PERCEPTIONS OF COMPUTING STAFF

- Not service oriented
- Thrive on change
- Worship technology for its own sake
- Insensitive to the differences between disciplines
- Lack of interest in and knowledge of the past
- Poor management, people and strategic skills
- Aggressive-abrasive

COMPUTING STAFFS' PERCEPTIONS OF LIBRARIANS

- Inflexible
- Can't think outside the box
- Don't understand technology
- Impractical
- Hell bent on archiving everything
- Partners only when in control
- Passive-aggressive

When asked how their roles differ,

librarians regarded themselves as responsible for providing the infrastructure that links the content of information resources, such as catalogs, indexes and specialized bibliographic databases. Computing staff expressed ownership of the technological infrastructure that transmits information resources, such as personal computers, file sharing and Internet access.

When asked to identify what is unique about their roles, the groups identified the following areas:

COMPUTING STAFF

- Handle large-scale computing
- Establish campuswide standards for hardware and software
- Ensure network security
- Maintain and upgrade network capacity
- Apply for grants
- Provide gateways, support computer software, and provide expertise in programming

LIBRARIANS

- Identify, evaluate, acquire, organize and describe information resources
- Instruct in use of all information resources
- Instruct in network use and multimedia systems
- Preserve information resources
- Ensure continuity and stability of resources (both print and electronic)

BOTH USED THE FOLLOWING TERMS TO DESCRIBE

THEIR OWN RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Provide access to information
- Assess available information resources
- Integrate resources
- Instruct in how to use information-retrieval tools
- Manage information resources
- Identify appropriate resources/tools
- Support the campus mission

Yet each described the other's role more narrowly. Computing staff described the librarians' role as primarily cataloging and managing print collections; librarians described the computing staff's role as primarily management and technical support of systems and networks.

Despite each unit's perception of the other, clearly, some key activities are common to both units:

- Developing training tools and systems documentation

- Designing, operating and using local and wide area networks
- Planning, selecting and operating systems hardware and software
- Collecting and organizing information in various forms and formats
- Creating, maintaining, querying and managing databases
- Analyzing user, service and system needs
- Providing consulting and technical assistance; and
- Instructing faculty, students and staff in all of the above

The goals in these activities are also much the same: helping users to access, manipulate or use information—in all its definitions—through the optimum use of hardware, software and communications systems. And both organizations face the same fundamental problems:

- Meeting rising user expectations and demands
- Understanding new technologies
- Revamping services and service procedures
- Retraining staff and expanding skill sets, and
- Coping simultaneously with change and the convergence of their responsibilities

Libraries and computer centers alike face many thorny policy issues that revolve around information in electronic format, such as freedom of access to information, ownership, author compensation, fair use and site licenses.

Administrators, faculty and students alike know that upcoming changes in information management will affect institutional costs, the convenience of information delivery and access mechanisms, and ultimately, the quality of learning, teaching and scholarship.

To ensure that the fortunes of our institutions are enhanced, all components of information services on our campuses must work closely and intelligently to apply the converging information technologies that underpin our operations.

Collaborative planning for technological infrastructures, campus information policies, instructional programs, and curriculum development support is essential. Such collaborative efforts help to reduce the risk of building information technology railroads of different gauges, resist trends which create barriers to accessing scholarly information, highlight the partners' complementary skills and foster mutual respect between the units. ■

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A Brief History of the Oberlin Group

By Ray English and Will Bridegam

The idea for the Oberlin Group grew out of conferences of the presidents of 50 liberal arts colleges held at Oberlin in 1984 and 1985 to discuss the role of private colleges in educating the nation's scientists. The colleges represented had produced an exceptional number of graduates who later earned doctorates in scientific fields. One of the purposes of these conferences was to draw national attention to the importance of liberal arts colleges for scientific education and, in so doing, to garner more foundation and government support.

Drawing on the science conferences model, the late Bill Moffett, then Director of libraries at Oberlin, formed a steering committee to plan a meeting of 60 liberal arts college library directors. Members were Bill Moffett (Oberlin) chair, Will Bridegam (Amherst), John Sheridan (Colorado College), Kathy Spencer (Franklin and Marshall), Christopher McKee (Grinnell), Eleanor Pinkham (Kalamazoo), Becky Pollock (Reed), and Richard Werking (Trinity University). The first meeting was held at Oberlin in November 1986. The group discussed issues of common concern, including the need for more library funding. Library directors from the 50 institutions represented at the science conferences were invited, as well as directors from a number of other selective liberal arts colleges. The first conference was a success and the directors decided to meet every year at a member institution. They became known as the "Oberlin Group" because of the site of the first meeting.

From the beginning the Oberlin Group has functioned informally and with minimal structure. Its main purpose has been to share information among the directors in a collegial way and to establish

an atmosphere of mutual encouragement and support. Since the first conference, the Oberlin Group has evolved well beyond the annual meeting. Bill Moffett established (and Ray English has continued) a listserv at Oberlin for the discussion of matters of common concern. In 1991 the group established an annual statistical survey, adapted from an earlier survey compiled by Art Monk (Bowdoin); initially compiled by Dennis Ribbens (Lawrence) the survey is now coordinated by Larry Frye (Wabash). Since 1991 Leland Park (Davidson) has compiled the "Obegroup Directory" and distributed it annually to members. Members routinely conduct surveys and share their findings with the group. In the 1990s the group initiated cooperative projects and activities such as reciprocal interlibrary loan agreements.

More recently members have negotiated consortial contracts for subscriptions to electronic journals and electronic reference services. Because the entire membership is not obligated to participate in these consortial contracts, the subscribing subgroup varies from project to project.

A membership committee, created in 1989, established criteria for membership and recommended new members for the group, with an overall cap of 75 institutions.

(Willamette University became the 73rd member in 1992.) One or more host libraries plan annual meetings, assisted by a larger Steering Committee that includes the current host(s), the host(s) from the previous year and the coordinator of the listserv. Shortly before each conference, the membership is invited to suggest topics of current interest for discussion. The Steering Committee selects members to make an initial presentation and then to lead a discussion. The opportunity to talk formally and informally with other liberal arts college library directors about current issues in college librarianship is one of the key benefits of membership in the group.

In 1996 the group reviewed its organizational status. At issue was the question of whether it should incorporate so that it could, as a legal entity, negotiate with vendors and apply for grants. After considerable discussion, the group decided not to formalize its structure. Rather, it chose to remain an unincorporated "organization of liberal arts college libraries, represented by their directors, that exists for discussion, the sharing of ideas, collegiality, the sharing of statistics and other cooperative activities that these directors are empowered by their institutions to undertake." ■

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