

The Publisher and the library: converging professions or the start of the true hybrid library

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Abstract:

Libraries have always been adopters of new technology and the integration of such technology has enhanced the range of services and resources that can be supplied from a single library. The traditional publisher may have been lagging behind in the adoption of new technologies and it is only in recent times that publishers are using digital delivery to enhance their print-based titles. However, as the publisher is the holder of copyright to a large body of information, they could enter into competition with libraries by providing direct access to this content.

This paper explores whether, in the digital age, the publisher and library are competitors or whether the real need is for synergy and partnership to create a critical mass of Australian digital content.

Jerry Campbell recently argued that the advent of digital publishing, and the globalisation of delivery via the Internet, means that traditional library services may be challenged by direct delivery of resources from the copyright holder. He proposes a scenario whereby collaboration between specialist universities and specialist publishers could provide digital learning resources that can undercut local delivery. This prospect will lead to competition with traditional providers and he suggests that 'we must thoroughly evaluate the likelihood that at least some of the functions presently assigned to libraries will be offered as large scale (national or international) commercial undertakings.'¹

This challenge suggests that specialist, global publishers could become competitors to some library or information services, even in the delivery of local information. Alternatively, collaboration between the publisher and the information provider can lead to the preservation of local content and provide new models for digital publishing. It has been through such collaboration that Australian content is provided in the digital age. In examining the digital publishing processes, it is clear that new models for publishing, access and delivery are being developed. This paper will explore issues associated with digital publishing and attempt to predict ways in which new digital publishing processes will impact on delivery through library services.

Publisher as the library

Campbell argues that traditional library services, practice and procedures are designed for access to print-based content. He states that libraries' physical environment and storage and retrieval processes are based primarily on the management of hard copy content and that these processes need to be challenged as library services move into the next decade. One reason for taking up this challenge is that specialist publishers, particularly those involved in publishing scientific journals, hold the copyright to a critical mass of content. These publishers have traditionally relied on hard copy delivery of this content and thus there has been a differentiation of roles between the publisher as the content creator and the library as the content archiver and disseminator.

The digital environment has the potential to change these roles. Campbell paints the picture of specialist publishers, who hold copyright in a critical mass of content, providing this content directly to university faculties on a global basis. The publishers' ability to provide direct access to their digital content could obviate the need for traditional library services at the institution or faculty level. Indeed, there are even moves by some international publishers to directly compete with the higher education sector in the delivery of courses. Harcourt General 'is starting an Internet university and wants to become the first major publishing house to offer accredited college degrees'.²

While the specialist publisher is in the position to provide such global access to content, it is interesting that some models being developed for distribution of e-books

¹ Jerry D. Campbell, 'The real Y2K problem: understanding libraries in the new century', Reference and Information Service Section Conference 1999,

<http://www.csu.edu.au/special/raiss99/papers/jcampbell.html>

² John Hechinger, 'Textbook publisher plans web university' *Asian Wall Street Journal*, 7th July 1999

mirror the function of the library environment. Net-Library (<http://www.netlibrary.com>), an Internet based e-book service, is using the metaphor of a 'loan' for use of their digital content. The loan can be short term, up to eight hours or you can directly purchase the e-book.

The existence of Net-Library and Campbell's prediction about commercial online journal publishing suggest that in some instances the publisher can assume parts of the role of the library or information service in a manner not previously possible.

Library/university as the publisher

The alternative publishing process has been one where institutions, especially libraries, have taken on the role of publisher as a means to generate content and directly disseminate research or information. This is exemplified by the SPARC (Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition) project. SPARC has arisen as a response to the rising cost of hard science journals and attempts to provide a consortia approach to self publishing. US universities can join the SPARC consortia through a membership fee and commitment to contribute to content creation as well as a commitment to ongoing subscription to the resulting journals. While traditional publishing processes such as peer review and editorial control are still completed, digital delivery assists in the distribution and access to this content.

In addition to consortia publishing initiatives, many organisations have embarked on internet publishing of journals resulting in digital publications such as the *Internet Journal of Chemistry* (<http://www.ijc.org>) or, the *Australian Humanities Review* (<http://www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/AHR/>). Such journals are initiated from professional associations or from university faculties as a means to ensure the dissemination of research and ideas. These publishing initiatives provide an alternative to the global corporate publishing processes and provide a possibility for the development and maintenance of local content. The success of these projects, however, is often based on the degree of commitment to traditional publishing processes. The material and time costs associated with commissioning and publishing cannot be seen as a simple 'extra' to the academic workload. Thus, there are numerous examples of digital journals that were originally published 'freely' on the internet, that have now been commercialised due to the need to generate revenue to cover the editorial and production processes.

Developing models for digital publishing

The scenarios just outlined suggest a blurring of the processes of publishing and information dissemination. While it is possible that globalised digital publishing could impact on aspects of the libraries' role, the current reality is that most libraries are accepting the challenge to develop information services based on an integration of both print and digital content. Globalisation does, however, impact on the publishing of local content. Digital versions of local content are being integrated into international products, however, this has been a slow process and when products of international scope are adopted, they have sometimes been at the expense of local indexing products or smaller local content digital products.

The ways customers utilise libraries is changing as the demand for desktop delivery of services, access for remote users and centralised serving of international campuses or locations increases. Digital full content allows for the provision of library services in new ways. The librarian's demand for a single point of access to content, for example, through the web browser, challenges the publisher to provide more content digitally. The provision of digital content is, in reality, a twofold concept: that of digitising existing material (e.g. print journals) and that of commissioning new content directly for digital publication. How does the publisher meet both demands, especially in a smaller geographical region such as Australasia?

As the publisher develops digital content, what impact does this have on libraries' collection development? While the demand for digital content is high, commissioning and publishing new digital content is a relatively new process, and the re-publishing of existing print material into a digital environment is one that is dependent on extensive rights negotiations (especially if a large quantity of material is to be developed for an aggregated service). Does a library's reliance on digital resources for provision of full content mean that collection development is now the realm of the electronic publisher and dependent on which digital rights can be negotiated? If individual titles are published directly onto the Internet, how will those titles be purchased or accessed? Is it possible that the library community will purchase selected digital texts in a similar manner to selecting printed titles or are new models of licensing and user access needed?

The market research, conducted for some recently published online textbooks, illustrates a number of perceived models for access, licensing and product modification. These include:

- the development of pricing models that allow access to the whole of the title or parts of the title. This approach means that the digital title can be purchased in its own right, or individual chapters can be accessed from linked databases.
- the licensing of the title for desktop delivery throughout an organisation, controlled by the library acquisition processes
- the licensing of the content for organisational re-branding. This will allow an educational institution or a corporate entity to use the content on an Intranet for specific purposes. Re-branding or additional content could be included in the title.
- the licensing of the content for re-use in instructional design or coursework development.

These models suggest that there is potential for the publisher to remain as the content creator, yet allow the library or institution flexibility in adapting that content for its users' needs. The publisher remains the key player in commissioning, editing and developing content, yet allows this content to be incorporated as support material for courseware development or used as the basis for Intranet services. While suitable licensing processes are still being developed and tested, these models suggest a process for co-operative development of publishing processes especially for the direct tailoring of content for the varying information needs of different organisations.

Developing Australian full content: reaching critical mass

The commissioning of new material for direct Internet publishing is relatively new and an extensive quantity of digital material will not be achieved within the short term. Developing a 'critical mass' of Australian content means that collaborative processes are required in order to gain rights to current print journals and other scholarly works that are published within Australia.

Campbell suggests that specialist international publishers (particularly in the sciences) could compete directly with libraries, because these few publishers currently own the copyright for the majority of journal content. The scene in Australia is slightly different. Journal publishing stems from a number of sources, which include larger publishing houses, smaller specialist publishing companies and professional associations. In many instances, the publishers of professional journals do not hold copyright to a sufficient number of journals to provide critical mass. This means that most publishers of Australian content are not yet positioned to provide this content in the digital environment.

To reach a critical mass of Australian digital information, it is necessary to establish strategies based on collaboration between the various stakeholders in this development—the electronic publisher, the copyright holder, and the library/information community. RMIT Publishing is in a unique position to support collaboration between these various stakeholders as its publishing history is one of working with libraries and other bodies to publish the current range of Informit databases.

The National Library of Australia has a mandate to provide access to Australian resources and to support access to Australian information. As a publisher, RMIT Publishing has a commitment to provide resources that can assist in the location of and access to Australian information. While these two philosophies are coming from two different information sectors (the library and the publisher) it is obvious that there are synergies between the philosophies. The NLA, through its indexing of journal content for APAIS, has access to collections that could be digitised for wider distribution. It is obvious, however, that the NLA does not have the intellectual property rights to do so, nor do they necessarily have the publishing and distribution infrastructure for providing an integrated solution to re-publishing this information.

Changes in technology and the development of new business models mean that developing a critical mass of content and presenting this as a commercial, aggregated service is now possible. In a hypertext environment, it is possible to directly link to digitised images of content from Web-based search interfaces.

New business models for the clearance of copyright have also been developed that reflect the payment of royalties on the cost of a subscription licence and not from ongoing monitoring of access from the users' end.

Even with these business models and technology developments, the development of a product based on APAIS full content is only the beginning of developing critical mass. APAIS itself is only one of 62 databases available through Informit Online and RMIT Publishing acknowledges that the amount of material that is indexed and abstracted in databases will always outnumber the digital full content that can be commissioned or re-published in its complete form.

With this in mind, there is a need to provide the ability to access both digital content and print content through integrated publishing and information management solutions. The term 'hybrid library' has been coined to recognise that, at the moment, neither the publisher nor the library community can provide a fully digital solution. Material or content will continue to be published in a variety of formats and services that provide access to these resources need to have an infrastructure that can support a variety of formats.

These processes of developing Australian digital content illustrate an opportunity for collaborative approach to providing new ways to access Australian content.

The publisher and the library: competitors or collaborators in a hybrid environment?

This paper has attempted to paint a picture of issues associated with current digital publishing. Through the reference to Campbell's article, there is acknowledgment that the publisher could act as a direct competitor to the library environment. Holders of a critical mass of content could provide services directly to university faculties or to corporate end-users on a fee-for-service basis. However, this paper argues that there are also opportunities for collaboration between the electronic publisher and the library or information provider. This collaboration is recognised as being important within Australia as a means to developing a critical mass of Australian digital content.

The collaborative or, dare I say, hybrid environment actively reflects the publishing principles of RMIT Publishing. For such collaboration to be successful, business and development models need to reflect the following issues.

From the publisher's perspective:

- Investment is being made in developing critical mass of digital content. This investment needs to be recognised through suitable payment and licensing arrangements.
- This investment should be made in collaborative partnerships that include electronic publishers, traditional publishers and the library or information community. These partnerships have been developing in Australian digital publishing over the past ten years.
- Publishing models for digital titles continue to need to be explored. Traditional print publishing sees each book or title as being a unique identity and libraries have always developed their collection through the purchase of individual titles (as against buying all that the single publisher had to offer in print). For single titles to be purchased from the Internet, there is the perception that some form of added value may need to be offered and this could be through flexibility in licensing for re-use of the material.

- While licensing needs to maintain recognition and compensation for the publishing effort, new licence models will be required for a range of access options, from Internet portals to single digital titles. Textbooks published digitally for licensing to university Intranets will need to reflect access similar to the normal life span of a printed textbook. Thus three-year licences may become the norm for some content.
- The end-user may be a target market for some titles or resources, however, the likelihood is that publishers of aggregated resources will work in collaboration with library services to meet this market's needs.
- Publishers are still developing interface models for providing their content in the online environment. A search of an index may lead to a digital version of the resulting articles, but is there also a need to preserve the structure of the 'journal' so that content can be browsed as well as searched? This implies an interface development that preserves both journal and article level access.

From the library perspective:

- Service integration is important and libraries need the ability to integrate digital, print and document delivery services.
- Availability of digital publications provides the library community with desktop delivery of resources and the ability to provide remote clients with access to content.
- There is recognition that while electronic publishers are providing wider access to resources, there still remains the issue of the availability of non-digital resources. Libraries need to provide access to such resources.
- Some libraries are developing their own content by digitising intellectual property that they or their parent organisation owns. The library of the Naval Research Laboratory (NRL) in Washington, is developing a digital portal based on the purchase of commercial digital material as well as realising that 'one way in which libraries can create content ... is by digitising institutional publications that are not protected by copyright'³. This means that the blurring of the roles of the publisher and library is twofold, in that while the publisher could provide a 'digital library service', the library could also act as a 'self-publisher'.
- While the library can become the self-publisher, there are also benefits in working with professional publishers so that expertise and skills involved in content creation and electronic publishing are utilised.
- In the digital environment licensing is a main issue and while various models are available, flexibility of access, use and content deployment are favoured by the information community.

Conclusions

This paper has attempted to outline issues associated with digital publishing and reaching a critical mass of content. It is possible that the current defining roles of the library and the publisher may blur as libraries digitise their own intellectual property, or publishers establish digital content services directed to the end-user. A recent report, commissioned by the Library Relations Committee of the International

³ Laurie E. Stackpole and Richard James King 'Electronic journals as a component of the digital library', *Issues in science and technology librarianship*, Spring 1999, <http://www.library.ucsb.edu/istl/99-spring/article1.html>

Association of Scientific, Technical & Medical Publishers, suggests that 'the relationship between publishers and librarians is changing both because the technology is altering the ways in which information is prepared and disseminated, and because the expectations of our customers—the readers—are being raised'. The report concludes that 'publishers, intermediaries and librarians exist in a state of mutual inter-dependence. The extent to which we co-operate in developing and delivering products and services ... will determine the future of our professions'⁴. This report was commissioned to open dialogue regarding the suitable use of digital material, so that both the publishers' and libraries' rights can be addressed.

There are many opportunities for collaboration, including the development of new Australian databases, partnerships in developing digital full content and partnerships in establishing document delivery processes for non-digital material. It is through these collaborative strategies that the critical mass of Australian content in the digital environment will be developed and that the investment being made by the electronic publisher is in tune with the needs of the information community.

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