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ONLINE DATABASES

Swan Song & Issues Unresolved

By Carol Tenopir

AFTER 28 YEARS, 264 COLUMNS, 15 annual database marketplace surveys, and nearly half a million words, I am calling it quits for Online Databases. *Library Journal* and I are parting amicably: the responsibilities of administration and the concentration required on several large research grants make it increasingly difficult for me to wrap my head around the column. This year, cutting back from monthly columns to six per year actually made it more difficult as I no longer had Online Databases always percolating in my brain.

Writing this column for nearly three decades has allowed me to keep up with events; make library, publisher, and vendor contacts from all over the world; and attend dozens of fascinating meetings. Lately, I've been focusing on small, targeted conferences that I call "hidden gems," like the Charleston Conference, the "Fiesole" Collection Development Retreat, and the UK Serials Group (UKSG).

Shifting e-collections

At those meetings I take copious notes but don't always get it right. At the 2010 Fiesole retreat, Jim Mouw of the University of Chicago spoke about patron-driven acquisitions. I mistakenly quoted him in my June 1 column (p. 24) as stating that the University of Chicago Library (UCL) is spending 50 percent of its monographic budget on Patron Initiated Purchasing. Mouw was actually quoting figures from other major libraries. In actuality, while UCL is currently purchasing about 20 percent of its monographs in e-format, this is largely accomplished through traditional means. It has long had a system in place for purchase recommendations but has yet to deploy a patron-initiated purchasing program. As at Chicago, ebooks and innovative ways to acquire them will remain important topics this coming year, as libraries continue the shift to e-collections.

No consensus on way forward

This June I attended two small international conferences with a similar focus—the 14th annual conference on Electronic Publishing (El-Pub), held in Helsinki, Finland, and the Fourth Bloomsbury Conference on E-Publishing and E-Publications, held at University College London.

These meetings brought librarians, publishers, and researchers together to discuss the social and technical transformations happening in scholarly publishing. Goals and ideals are shared by conference attendees across the board, but

port from the U.S. Interagency Working Group on Digital Data, "Harnessing the Power of Digital Data for Science and Society." Unsurprisingly, new careers for data managers and expanded roles for libraries in data curation and e-science are a rising international trend as well, led in the United States by grants and projects funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS).

New roles for data

At Bloomsbury, Scott Brandt and Charles Watkinson of Purdue University Libraries (PUL), IN, and Purdue Univer-

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the way forward remains unresolved. For example, attendees at both gatherings acknowledged the importance of peer review but differed on how well the current system works and whether it should be open or closed, extensive or "light touch." There was similarly wide agreement about the benefits of increased access to scholarly literature but little consensus on whether open access economic models substantially support that goal or not.



The extension of research articles to include raw findings data was one improvement envisioned in both Helsinki and London, prompted by the increased role data access is playing in nearly all spheres. Highlighting this trend, *Nature* devoted its September 10, 2009, issue to the scientific data deluge, with frequent references to the January 2009 re-

sity Press, respectively, talked about just such an IMLS-funded venture to build data profiles of scientists with the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

They have found that researchers are willing to share their data but prefer means that will return some benefit as well. Widespread best practices for data citation, data preservation, and editorial services could incentivize sharing, Brandt and Watkinson reported. It's easy enough to speak about grouping these functions, but remember that the nature and complexity of data vary tremendously among subject disciplines and individual researchers, as do restrictions. Original data sources range from primary texts for humanities researchers to gigantic shared data sets recorded by remote sensors to field data collected by social science researchers.

To address this burgeoning field, PUL is building out its research data capabilities to encompass the entire research life cycle including publishing, curation, and stewardship of e-data and e-publications.

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Building relevant skills and tools in the library and university press will be required, as will further understanding of faculty data needs in terms of how the library and the press can lend their services.

For all of the discussion of dramatic changes, Cliff Lynch, director of the Coalition for Networked Information, at Bloomsbury pointed out that the prevailing notions of scholarly publishing are surprisingly conservative. "Journal articles have transformed from paper to digitally emulated paper; nothing that is conceptually alien to the researcher of the past," he said. He challenged us to think of how to move beyond digital versions of print on paper in ways that make sense.

To my mind, moving forward sensibly requires research and collaboration. My research will remain focused on libraries, publishing, and the issues that are important to them. I will continue to attend meetings and keep up with the trends and changes in "online databases"—I just need more time to concentrate on research that helps me better understand the needs of scholars now and into the future.

A CONSIDERED PERSPECTIVE

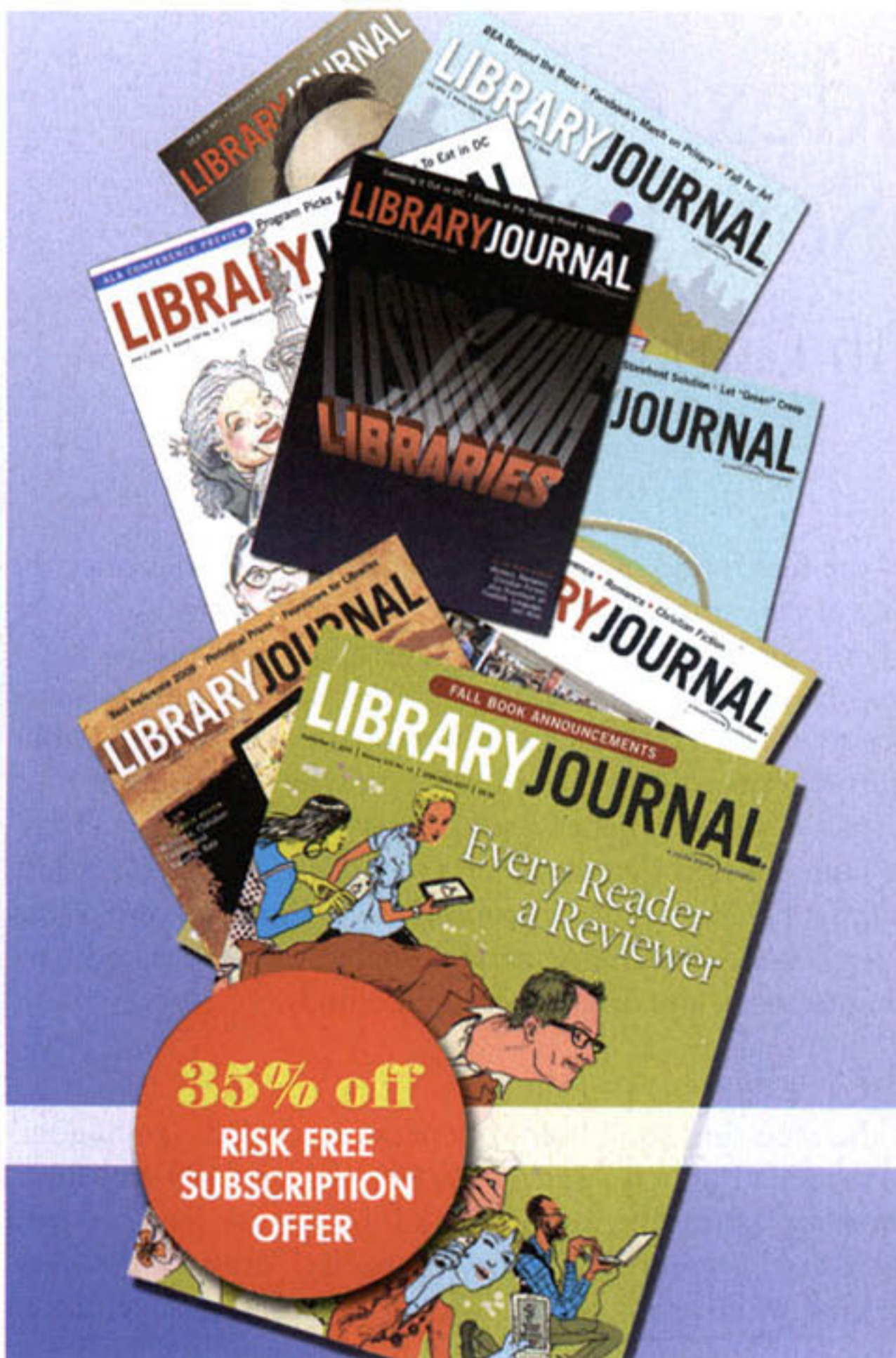
In March 1983 (column #2), Carol Tenopir wrote, "I have no doubt that end user searching will someday replace searching by a trained intermediary."

In December 1996, nearly halfway through her *Online Databases* run, she reconsidered: "Today I would have to say 'coexist with,' not 'replace.'"

Now, after 28 years of contemplating the market and evaluating the impact of interfaces on the end user, Tenopir has reached a new, broader conclusion. She told LJ,

"'End user searching' seems a quaint expression considering the state of online research today—finding answers and information online today is a part of everyday life, an expectation, something fundamental to the way most people operate at school and work. So, yes, 'end users' (aka real people) did take over searching for the most part and librarians play more of an educator or troubleshooter role. But in some areas, intermediaries are still (or again) relevant—particularly in corporate or government agencies where search experts are an important part of research teams, competitive intelligence operations, patent searching, and so forth."

With that, LJ congratulates her on a magnificent run of *Online Databases* and wishes her the best in future endeavors.



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