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“May you live in interesting times.” - This could be the slogan for libraries and all institutions at the end of the century. Is it a curse or blessing?

What does all of what we've heard so far mean for us, for the staff?

Is librarianship becoming a dead end profession? I don't think so. It may be a changing profession, but it always has been.

It's clear that we will have some form of the virtual digital library in our professional future. What's not clear is the course of developments or what the final picture will look like.

Of course, libraries and librarians, like all of society, have been experiencing change over many decades. It is the just rate of change and the resulting uncertainty and anxiety that really make these times so challenging and interesting.

An important paradigm shift which underlies this discussion is the information ownership v. access equilibrium and how its balance is being influenced by the new web-based technologies. The existing collection development model used by libraries and the need to identify a new, more appropriate collection development model is what I'm going to talk about today with a particular focus on public libraries since that is what I know. But I think the information applies to all libraries.

For the majority of this century, librarians have followed the ownership model for their collections. Having an item physically in the collection was considered to be the best and most cost effective method of providing information.

One of the most important features of libraries **has been** the collection of books and journals that they housed. Of course, this is still true, despite the advent of new electronic information storage and dissemination technologies. With the emergence of the Internet, however, it is interesting to speculate on what will happen to collections as we know them and to us, the collectors. The times they are a changin'.

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Reason for doing: Why do we collect electronic resources?

Freedom of place and time – to provide access to information from the library when it's closed, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Satisfied customers - Library users who are Web users, a growing group, expect customization, interactivity, and customer support. Approaches that are library-focused instead of user-focused will be increasingly irrelevant. To keep up with the times, what people want, etc.

To **supplement** your print collection – To make more information more readily available

Greater storage capacity

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Information is usually updated more quickly, more often

Opportunity to provide current local information not available or not easily made available in print

Availability of free or low-cost current information

Reduce Data Smog as someone put it recently – to help folks navigate through the garbage to find the gems

Draws new clientele

Many other reasons

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Organizational changes

That's great. We know why we do it. But how do we do it? How does this fit in with the selection of print materials, which we all agree are not going away. One of the least frequently mentioned aspects of automation and related technologies is the impact on a library's organization and the impact on the decades-old acquisitions process.

New organizational structures will be needed if libraries are going to succeed in an electronic, networked environment. Libraries need structures which allow for flexibility and innovation and which are more responsive to change than at present.

Technology will probably be a driving force behind the restructuring. Networked communication has the potential to influence the overall work environment and the capabilities of employees; to foster new task structures and reporting relationships; and to encourage broader participation and involve more people in the decisionmaking process. The effect of this is to push responsibility down and across the organization.

Innovative ways of using technology to transform traditional services or develop new services may not result in a change in the actual structure of an organization, but rather a change in the way people work.

Technical services and public services staffs are already working together more closely as a result of technology. We can expect traditional functional distinctions to continue to

blur as we move into the virtual library. We might develop the concept of a subject rather than a functional approach to work.

Other forms of organization will undoubtedly appear as libraries try to become more responsive to user needs and demands and to move from a traditional hierarchy organized around function or tasks to what is now called a client-or user centered organization.

Of all the public service units, reference has probably reaped the most immediate and visible benefits of the new technologies and the resulting improved access to information. Dealing directly with users, reference librarians are the people who can tap into a seemingly endless world of information to supply needed information with online database searches, CD-ROM products, the Internet, and more. Because of the direct patron contact, it is the reference librarian who has the immediate gratification of the user's thanks.

They are also the staff who have to deal with the users' sometimes high, sometimes unreasonable expectations of technologies. And the ones who have to deal with the patrons who do not want to use anything automated.

Reference staff also have additional stress by the need to know an increasing number of sophisticated and unique systems. As these products multiply more rapidly, reference librarians have less time to learn the systems. And these are generally the same people being asked to educate the public on the use of these resources.

Staff will be much happier if they can participate in the selection and organization of electronic resources since reference staff generally feel it's impossible to master the tools and keep up with everything. As their workloads increase and different resources are added, they can feel left behind and left out. By participating, they learn and grow and keep up.

Who else is affected? Well, collection development librarians for one. They are at the heart of the access/ownership situation. This is a dynamic process with ownership and access being spread over a wide continuum that varies from library to library. Given this situation, it is no longer sufficient for selectors to know the subject areas for which they are responsible. Now they must be familiar with various technologies in order to make informed judgments about the most appropriate format for the purchase of materials available in multiple formats: CD-ROM, local, WWW, tape loading, etc.

Librarians who are used to dealing with print material collecting only may not be comfortable with the idea of "collecting" electronic resources.

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Revamping Staff Roles and Organizational Structure

The way it is

Often a systems person is the webmaster, but who decides whether selecting web sites, databases, and electronic journals is the responsibility of the collection development department, the bibliographers, reference librarians, or systems staff?

There is often resistance by staff to participate in the selection and evaluation of electronic resources. Some staff don't think web sites should be viewed as part of the collection. Others are afraid of technology.

Others are unsure of how to incorporate this new area into their everyday duties. Others just need guidance by management, a push to break new ground, and most of all a structure.

In many cases, staff members who are eager to use the new resources just start collecting electronic resources with no formal structure in place. This often leads to a more formalized process of electronic collection development, like some examples we will review in a bit. In many cases, it seems, the informal process, consisting of one or two enthusiastic individuals selecting sites has remained and that may work for those places. However, I think that having a formal structure and a process in place will make staff more comfortable, will make expectations understood, and will make the collection of both print and electronic resources better organized and more comprehensive.

No structure is going to fit every library. The library's mission, current organizational structure, and quantity of staff will all determine the best fit.

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The way it could be

Because electronic collection development is such a time-consuming endeavor and to reduce the workload of individual libraries, one model is to try a consortial arrangement for collecting electronic resources. This can be one large group selecting free web sites for a shared subject directory and/or a consortial licensing of subscription databases.

Statewide or consortial collection development

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SAILOR <http://www.sailor.lib.md.us>

SAILOR is Maryland's Online Public Information Network, a publicly funded project of MD's Public Libraries. The primary source of funding is federal grant funding which is managed by the State. A Collection Development Advisory Committee is tasked with establishing a collection development plan and identifying individuals to enhance Internet resources available through Sailor.

Shared resources include library catalogs, local and state information databases, including a state sponsored subscription to Infotrac and links to Internet sites. This is made possible by the work of a small staff, including a Project Manager and Project Database Librarian and volunteers from MD libraries who select the sites.

Topical Areas Reviewers (TAR), a working group of the Sailor® project, determine which resources will be made accessible through the network. In partnership with the Sailor® Information Services staff, this group reviews resources against stated criteria. In addition, user suggestions for adding Internet resources are directed to this group for review.

Information resources which fall outside the topical areas or are questionable are reviewed by the Sailor® Collection Development Advisory Committee. These resources are reviewed on a rotating basis every six months by the TAR and the Sailor® Information Services staff.

While funding is available, Sailor® makes commercial databases such as those from the Information Access Company available to Sailor® users. These agreements are negotiated through the Sailor® Operations Center, with input from the Sailor® Collection Development Advisory Committee.

Most of the larger public libraries in Maryland still include web sites and subscription databases directly from their own homepages but also link to SAILOR. Smaller libraries without adequate staff or resources can point directly to SAILOLR and have some electronic resources available for their publics.

How do I know all this? I looked at SAILOR's Collection Development Plan.

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Librarians' Index to the Internet <http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/InternetIndex/>

Another example of a large collection program is the Librarians' Index to the Internet. If you're not familiar with it, you need to be. It's a searchable, annotated subject directory of about 5,000 Internet resources selected and evaluated by librarians for use in public libraries. This project began in 1990 as reference librarian, Carole Leita's Gopher bookmark file and has gone through a couple transformations since. It is currently part of the Berkeley SUNSITE, complete with a search engine and subject terms.

Sites are selected and evaluated by trained librarians from around CA. Currently there are 70 librarians on the LII Indexing Team, which includes Carole Leita as Coordinator, reference librarians, Internet librarians, Young Adult and children's librarians, library assistants, information resources managers, technical services staff, cataloging specialists, branch managers, and even a retired librarian and library school student. Federal money was used to develop a training program, including an online manual and workshops for librarian-indexers. They have a great mechanism in place that allows the geographically

separated team members to update and maintain the site in what seems to be a simple fashion.

Texas State Library

State money is used to purchase databases for use in all Texas public libraries. Trials are set up by the committee chair at the State Library and evaluations and recommendations come from representative librarians from around the state. This will continue and other states are doing this as well. In addition, we are moving toward another method whereby individual libraries can subscribe to databases that the group evaluates at a discount based on how many other Texas libraries participate.

Individual Libraries

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Morton Grove Public Library <http://www.webrary.org/ref/refmenu.html>

<http://www.webrary.org/ref/weblinksmenu.html>

Informal leads to formal

This is a good example of one person getting the ball rolling on his or her own. This acclaimed library web site began as one staff member's list of links for use by the Reference staff. Other staff quickly got involved and within weeks the staff was setting up a web site. This was back in 1995.

The site is maintained by the webmaster who is the Head of Technical and Automated Services, the Head of Public Services, Head of Reference, and staff from the Reference, serials, readers advisory, and children's departments.

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Houston Public Library

Houston's web site selection procedure somewhat mimics its book selection procedure. Each month, a staff person in Collection Development goes through reviews of web sites from the Scout Report, Librarians Index to the Internet, Top Picks from Homework Central, as well as LJ, Booklist, Houston Chronicle, and staff suggestions. He eliminates sites that are inappropriate (too specialized, not much reference value, lots of plug-ins required, etc.). This list of sites (usually around 60) with the reviews is then looked at by the adult and juvenile selection committees (as part of their monthly book selection meetings). They narrow the list further (to around 45). The sites they agree sound good are then sent out for review.

The database selection and evaluation is not as rigid. The Collection Development manager and her assistant coordinator usually identify databases they think would be

useful and arrange trials. Access information is emailed throughout the system. They do have an evaluation form that they adapted from the State Library's. HPL does have an Electronic Reference User Group that they particularly seek input from. But everyone is welcome to give us input.

Then it mostly comes down to negotiations with the vendors plus discussion with our automation department. They have problems with some technical requirements of some database providers, especially as related to security.

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San Antonio Public Library

San Antonio's electronic collection development processes have been formalized since at least 1996. At San Antonio Public Library, we are trying to encourage staff members to participate in the electronic collection development process without letting chaos ensue. We have two formal committees who are responsible for electronic collection development, both of which are chaired by the Electronic Resources Coordinator, or me. This differs from Houston Public in that the electronic collection process is different from our print development.

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Internet Workgroup is responsible for the Library's web site.

This group consists of 12 librarians from branches, Children's, Internet training staff, Reference, Periodicals, and Bibliographic Services. Each Workgroup member is assigned 2-4 subjects in which to collect web sites. Subjects range from Art and Architecture to the Supernatural and Paranormal. They are responsible for updating their subject pages at least three times per year. The group meets every other month to discuss changes, discuss policy, and make suggestions about the Library's web site in general and also regularly corresponds via e-mail. While they are responsible for finding sites, I do send them lots of suggestions that come to me via several good listservs.

Sometimes subjects are assigned, but most often members have asked to take on subjects of interest to them or that they have expertise in or that they normally collect in. The Children's librarian selects sites for the Kids' Page and the parenting page, for instance.

This group also issues a bimonthly online newsletter for staff. The newsletter contains annotated web sites on a particular subject, such as Mexico, Women's History, and Native Americans. A notice about this is e-mailed to all staff so they know it's available for their use. We also encourage all staff to participate by suggesting sites for the homepage as well as subjects for the regular newsletter. They have access to a list with the subject names and assigned staff members, so they can contact those people directly.

While the Library does not yet have an Electronic Collection Development Policy or Plan, we do have a Library Administrative Directive on ELECTRONIC REFERENCE

SERVICE: USING THE INTERNET AS A REFERENCE TOOL that spells out who is responsible for appointing members to the Internet Workgroup and what the Internet Workgroup is responsible for doing.

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Electronic Resources Committee

I also chair another group of 5 librarians from branches, Children's, Periodicals and Reference. Last year this group performed a massive evaluation of current and potential databases, using a formal evaluation process complete with volunteers from all sections of the library. The Committee hashed over the results, made recommendations, and I used their advice and suggestions to make a recommendation to the Administration. This Committee evaluates databases that I set up on trial. They also make suggestions about databases we should try or what kind we should be looking for. We use an evaluation form and rate databases in the same categories.

Ultimately, for this type of electronic resource, though, someone has to be in charge and in regular contact with the Automation or Information Technology staff regarding existing and new technologies, networking compatibility, and other potentially sticky issues. Preferably, this person should have some knowledge about technological issues as well as licensing and negotiating with vendors. These skills or abilities are similar to but not completely the same as those related to print purchasing. In addition, this person needs to be the point person for contact with Administration and other departments.

The committee leader needs to consider or be able to perform the following:

Compatibility with current/future technology/infrastructure

Decisions regarding remote v. in-house

Negotiation with vendors over licensing/pricing/timing/access

Budgeting issues/priorities/decisions

Authentication methods

Editor

Participate in decisionmaking/evaluation in consortial arrangements and balance that with the library's budget/needs, and current subscriptions

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In both areas, free and subscription electronic resources, other staff should feel free to recommend and I think it should even be expected for them to participate. In order to move toward a different collection development model, one in which most or all staff who participate in print collections also participate in electronic collections, we need to prepare our staff for that.

You can start by hiring people or promoting in current staff the following skills:

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Staff Skills

Capacity to learn constantly and quickly. It doesn't matter what they know now. Can they assess a new technology and what it may do (or not do) for the library? Can they stay up-to-date?

Flexibility – As technologies, protocols, and standards evolve and change, what staff do must change with them.

An innate skepticism – Many technologies are hyped way beyond their capacity. Need common sense.

Propensity to take risks

Abiding public service perspective – Need staff who understand the needs of users. Many of those currently building digital libraries do not have a public service background.

An appreciation of what others bring to the effort – Team effort. You need to work together across lines of seniority, rank, and office structure.

Skill at enabling and fostering change

As we move toward the virtual library, existing staff **will** need to become more computer and networking literate.

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Some ideas we are using at San Antonio Public Library include:

Making current staff more aware of the resources available to them. The Internet Workgroup created a Netopedia: A Librarian's Guide to Internet Reference to get staff up to speed using electronic resources. This is an online guide to using the Internet in your daily work with bibliographies, review sources, both print and electronic, professional development sites, the Top 25 reference sites, and policies regarding Internet use.

Currently, I'm in the process of creating a Database Notebook, which will be available in print and online, with everything anybody needs to know about the subscription databases we have available through our own library and through the State Library. I have found that many people do not have the time or do not take the time to find out what we have available online. For that reason, I send all staff e-mails about updated subject pages, reminders about new and old databases, and examples of how or why you would choose a particular electronic resource over another or over a print resource.

The Internet Workgroup also held three seminars at Staff Development Day last year on how to effectively use the Library's homepage to find answers. In addition, staff is encouraged to attend the Internet classes we offer the public and we also have one class a month just for staff on using the Internet as a reference tool.

Other ideas

Make it easy for them to use – are there enough computers for staff to use on their off desk time (do they have off desk time). You can't look for electronic resources if you can't access them.

Make time for this. It's important. One of the big reasons people don't participate is that they don't have time. All the Internet Workgroup members have full-time, very full jobs performing print collection development, reference and readers' advisory service, storytime, community outreach, teaching Internet classes, taking care of paperwork, hiring, firing, etc. Locating and evaluating sites, then maintaining correct links is extremely time-consuming given the exponential growth of web-based resources. You can make it easy and welcoming to participate by creating guidelines for submitting web site and database suggestions, making evaluation forms available, by forming committees and letting people know how to express interest, by asking for volunteers to help evaluate databases.

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Collection Development Policy

This is very important.

The library needs to explain how decisions about electronic resources are made and who is responsible for them. A collection development policy, plan or statement should address the types of resources for which individual selectors are responsible and those that are the responsibility of a larger coordinating group. If the library has an advisory committee that develops and reviews policies for electronic resources, this committee should be named and its purview explained.

The policy should also explain how the library handles contract negotiations and review. While the library may not wish to include detailed procedures, it will provide an overview of who is responsible for which activities. In addition, responsibilities for monitoring compliance should be specified.

In many libraries, part of the selection process for electronic resources will involve extensive consultation with other library units. If selectors are expected to discuss the service and support impacts of a resource with staff members in reference (service applications), acquisitions, and cataloging (processes and priorities), automated systems (hardware and software needs), and facilities (telecommunications requirements), this should be made clear.

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Conclusion

As organizational structures evolve, staff may feel insecure. Already burdened staff can feel overwhelmed by the new and often unfamiliar tasks and responsibilities being assigned them. Many long-term staff, who were never trained for such a technical environment and never expected to work in such a situation, can feel particularly threatened.

The times are changing and staff need to keep up with the times. I hope you have gained some new ideas about how to help them do that.