

Cornell University Library

Council of Librarians

June 10, 1998

The focus of this meeting was electronic publishing.

Brendan Wyly opened the meeting with an "evaluative overview of electronic publishing in higher education." He described the current model of scholarly communication through publishing and described the roles played and the value added by publishers and other intermediaries (libraries, secondary publishers, indexing services, document delivery services) who help connect authors and readers.

It is Brendan's view that the current paper publishing process for scholarly communication has become untenable. The volume of scholarly information is growing so rapidly that economic decisions by intermediary institutions (e.g., publishers, libraries, indexing services) hinder the communications process. For example, there are often long delays in publishing and delivering documents, and the price of journals is forcing libraries to cancel subscriptions and curtail the purchase of monographs.

The solution Brendan advocates is the "disintermediation of the communications process" while retaining valuable mediated services, such as the cataloging, indexing and archiving of the information and peer review. He then described three types of electronic publishing models and evaluated them with regard to their potential for accomplishing the disintermediation of the scholarly communications process:

1. Existing print publishers providing electronic versions of their print publications (e.g., Project MUSE, Elsevier, Cambridge University Press.) These do not involve disintermediating the communications process.
2. The "Wildcat" scholarly press--scholar's starting new electronic publications to meet communications needs unmet by the existing publishing structure (e.g., *Journal of World-Systems Research*, *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, *The Cornell Vet School's Consultant*.)
3. Projects that have taken on intermediary roles to facilitate the broader use of electronic publications (e.g., OCLC's Electronic Collections Online, JSTOR, High Wire Press, e-Print Archives, RLG's Arches Project.)

Brendan stated that the wildcat press offers an interesting opportunity to transform the scholarly communications process but that it is threatened by "the practical difficulties readers encounter in accessing their publications." It is in this area that libraries can play a key role by selecting, cataloging and archiving these publications. Libraries can also encourage the indexing services they purchase to provide coverage for these publications.

[To read the paper upon which Brendan's presentation was based see:
http://sigma.mgtlib.cornell.edu/epub/ad198_2.html]

Christian Boissonnas then provided an overview of selected electronic publishing activities that have occurred or are being planned at Cornell. These include:

- Dissertations Available on Internet SYstems (DAISY): a project to capture and store electronic dissertations in the field of Engineering. (1992-1995)

- Core Literature of Agriculture and related projects (e.g., The Essential Electronic Agricultural Library (TEEAL))
- Making of America (I, II, ...)
- Networked Computer Science Technical Reports Library (NCSTRL)
- Bob Cooke's proposed Land Grant Press: a model calling for each university campus to take responsibility for its own publications.

Sarah Thomas provided information about the Electronic Publishing Steering Committee that she chairs. The Committee was named by the Provost in March 1997 in order to provide Cornell with excellent leadership in the area of electronic publishing. All university stakeholders are represented, including media services, extension and the Campus Store. The Committee is working on a report Sarah expects to present to the Provost in the fall.

Submitted by
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