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DIGITAL PRESERVATION
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DIGITAL PRESERVATION
EDUCATION



Valerie
Ryder

[CONFERENCE REPORT]

VALERIE RYDER

Electronic Resources & Libraries 2010 Conference

The 5th Electronic Resources & Libraries (ER&L) Conference was held February 1–3, 2010, in Austin, TX. This conference is planned by academic librarians to discuss issues concerning electronic resources and to share best practices.

The 350 attendees from 40 states and six countries were primarily from the academic library community (77%) with 16% representing the information industry and the remainder from libraries in government agencies, institutions, and corporations. Registration is capped to maintain the collegial atmosphere of the conference and to facilitate networking and discussion. Vendors from the information content and services industry provide some funding for the conference to defray expenses and keep the registration fee as low as possible, compared with other conferences. The only sales opportunity is the two-hour Sponsors' Reception, hosted by the vendors, on Monday evening.

Prevalent themes of this year's conference were:

- » ways of dealing with library budget reductions (a relatively new experience for academic librarians),
- » using electronic resources usage statistics to evaluate the collections and determine cancellations,
- » creation and maintenance of digital collections with local content (such as historical documents, maps, artifacts, and art objects),
- » standards for data and system interfaces, and
- » technology trends such as electronic books (e-books), mobile access devices, web-scale discovery, and federated search.

The overwhelmingly favorite topic on attendees' minds from the Thought Cloud produced on the ER&L website prior to the conference was Usage Metrics. Workflow and E-books tied for second place in the myriad of issues that attendees wanted to discuss.

Pre-conference seminars on January 31 covered how to successfully market electronic resources, techniques for processing, storing, and viewing usage data and explored current dilemmas in information ethics.

The keynote speaker, University of Texas School of Information professor **Lance Hayden**, set the tone for the conference by challenging attendees' thinking about security and privacy as related to digital information in the wild world of the Internet.

The 45 sessions presented over two and a half days were organized into ten tracks:

- 1 Electronic Resource Management (ERM) Systems
- 2 Managing Electronic Resources
- 3 Standards
- 4 E-books
- 5 Statistics & Assessment
- 6 ER Delivery & Promotion
- 7 Scholarly Communication
- 8 Collaboration
- 9 Emerging & Future Technologies
- 10 Collection Development

Most of the presentations were case studies discussing how these issues are addressed at the presenters' institutions and offering best practices and lessons learned.

Academic librarians are struggling with the significant reductions in their subscriptions budgets that have occurred each year since 2007. Many libraries subscribe to full-text journal databases that duplicate coverage with their print journal collections so they are paying for the same journal title multiple times, sometimes with different time period coverage and embargos. Librarians are struggling with how to identify and eliminate the overlaps to reduce their subscription spending without reducing their content scope. **Diane Carroll** of Washington State University, **Tim Jewell** of the University of Washington, and **Nina Bakalbasi** of Yale University Library



each presented their data-intensive work processes for assessing the journal collections at their universities. **Gayle Baker** and **Ken Wise** of the University of Tennessee presented how they calculate Return on Investment (ROI) for their journal collections as part of justifying their budget levels and proving value to their institutions.

Many of the libraries are embracing the e-book as another delivery mechanism for content whether the media is a web-based e-book, a digital book delivered through the Internet, a digital book delivered to a mobile device (e-book reader or other device), or a web-based Major Reference Work. Libraries are subscribing to e-book collections as well as individual book titles. They are challenged by the selection and evaluation process concerning which media and platform to choose as well as accommodating these media into their ordering and cataloging processes. **Lee Hisle** of Connecticut College, **Ellen Safley** of the University of Texas at Dallas, and **Nancy Gibbs** of Duke University shared their experiences with patron-driven selection of e-books where students and faculty members determine which e-books are added to the library collection through their usage of specific e-books from collections made available in the library's online public access catalog. **Dani Roach** and **Carolyn DeLuca** of the University of St. Thomas delivered humorous but realistic insights on the quandary that many e-books have the characteristics of serials and databases as well as print books. Their interactive dialogue with attendees illustrated how librarians are rethinking and revising their technical work processes to handle e-books as hybrids. During session question and answer periods as well as networking conversations, some librarians expressed their preferences for buying individual e-books by title rather than collections of e-books. They commented that they lost the ability to select e-journals by title when they converted to the e-journal bundles and they do not want to lose that selectivity when they move to

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e-books from print books. The lament of "life was easier in the print media for books" was expressed by more than a few librarians.

A common theme throughout the conference was that librarians want systems to handle all their electronic resources from selection and procurement to user access and delivery. They want new systems, such as electronic resource management systems (ERMs), to integrate well with their existing systems, such as their integrated library system (ILS) or online public access catalog (OPAC). In many cases, the academic librarians have tested the ERMs from many vendors but found them lacking desired features or incompatible with their existing work processes, so they have developed their own ERM system or particular modules. Those libraries that have implemented vendor ERM systems have had to modify their work processes to conform to the system's requirements. Excellent case studies were presented by **Abigail Bordeaux** of

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Harvard University as well as **Benjamin Heet** and **Robin Malott** of University of Notre Dame.

The standards scene for ERM systems is still in flux. **Tim Jewell** of the University of Washington gave a good review of the NISO ERM Working Group's fast track efforts to perform a "gap analysis" of the remaining management and data standards issues. Original standards such as Electronic Resource Management Initiative (ERMI) were not standards but really "pre-standards." Vendors found it hard to develop systems using these standards. Following the analysis, the working group will make recommendations regarding the future of the ERMI data dictionary and identify gaps in interoperability and best practices to inform future work.

Another issue that was discussed frequently was the proliferation of problems with the quality of data passed from content providers to link resolvers, even those adhering to the OpenURL standard. Cornell University's **Adam Chandler** presented results of a study of several link resolvers and the data being passed from content providers. The success of an OpenURL link resolver finding the right article depends upon which data elements are passed from the content provider. A two-year NISO project was approved in December 2009 to investigate the feasibility of creating industry-wide transparent and scalable metrics for evaluating and comparing the quality of OpenURL implementations across content providers.

Interest continues in web-scale discovery engines as an improvement over federated search. **George Boston** of Western Michigan University explored the advantages and challenges of each approach to providing the user with a

simple, easy, and fast search solution that unifies all of the resources in a library. Web-scale discovery engines have to normalize metadata harvested from many sources in order for search to work well. Vendor web-scale discovery engines are still being improved and may not have normalized metadata for all sources that a library wants to search. This is similar to the lag in developing the search maps for each source that federated search engines needed to crawl when they were first marketed.

Jamene Brooks-Kieffer of Kansas State University Libraries challenged attendees to envision the future with new services and evolving standards as the journal article becomes the primary entity of scholarship. Technology solutions will expedite the discovery to delivery process for users but mask the librarian's role in ensuring seamless integration and provide business model challenges to information industry players who have a stake in the current workflow.

Closing session panelists provided the transition to next year's ER&L by discussing tools and technologies for the future. **Andrew Nagy** of Serials Solutions focused on Software as a Service (SaaS) and cloud computing, library resources discovery services, and next generation catalogs. **Ross Singer** of Talis illustrated the concept of linked data by showing how difficult it is for users to see how the library's collection of data is connected to the vast world of external data.

Once again the ER&L Conference provided a venue to share knowledge and experiences with electronic resources, learn of new developments and potential solutions, and debate challenging ideas in an open dialogue between the library community and information industry partners.

VALERIE RYDER <vryder@wolper.com> is Director of Information Strategy at Wolper Subscription Services in Easton, PA.

**Electronic Resources & Libraries
2010 website**

www.electroniclibrarian.org/erlwiki/ER%26L

Electronic Resources & Libraries 2010 presentation materials
www.electroniclibrarian.org/erlwiki/Program#Presentations_Listed_by_Track

NISO ERM Data Standards & Best Practices Review
www.niso.org/workrooms/ermreview

NISO Working Group on OpenURL Quality Metrics
www.niso.org/workrooms/openurlquality



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LINKS**