



Smart Libraries Newsletter
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July 2007 The End of the Romantic Library?

Smart Libraries Newsletter

Smart Libraries Newsletter delivers hard data and innovative insights about the world of library technology, every month.

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Smart Libraries

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The End of the Romantic Library?

Libraries frequently are described as the engines of many things—self-improvement, community pride, democracy, economic development, etc.—but rarely are they identified as temples of the romantic movement. I am not referring to love in the stacks (either licit or illicit), but rather to the romantic movement of the late 18th and early 19th centuries that gave us great poetry and, more to the point, a definite way of thinking about the relationship between the individual and the group.

Romanticism put the individual self on a pedestal. The self, perhaps in direct response to its interaction with elemental natural forces (or at least the contemplation of those forces), was the source of all creativity. Individual experience was the main thing. Groups and group behavior did not count for much. Crowded fields of daffodils were more interesting to William Wordsworth than crowds of people. Romantic poets did not write much about crowded places and the value of crowds, let alone the “wisdom of crowds,” which probably would have been dismissed by romantic poets and philosophers as an absurd phrase.

Culture Clash

For countries in Europe and North America that experienced a strong romantic movement, the basic tenets of romanticism quickly entered mainstream culture and society. Despite multiple wars, major population growth, the general urbanization of society, and significant technological advances, the romantic spirit still guides our society. It has become difficult for us to imagine the relationship between the individual and the group in terms that are not grounded in the idea of the romantic self. To this day, romantic cultures have a difficult time comprehending the worldview of cultures that have not experienced a strong romantic movement. Perhaps part of the war on terror is—or should be—an attempt to reconcile romantic and non-romantic cultures in amicable ways.

The self-reliant frontier mentality in the United States owes a great debt to the romantic poets and philosophers. John Wayne should have tipped his ten gallon cowboy hat to John Keats.

Libraries and the Romantic Self

Libraries implicitly pledged allegiance to the romantic spirit by designing their information systems and services for individual use. The individual quietly using

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I have never seen a library with a “buses welcome” sign proudly displayed out front.

the library is the romantic, ideal use model in most libraries. Even when a physical library is filled with people, often it is filled with individuals acting individually. Sometimes members of a family or a small study group using the library will engage in meaningful, sustained group behavior, but it is relatively rare in libraries. I have never seen a library with a “buses welcome” sign proudly displayed out front.

The emergence of digital libraries over the past two decades evidently has not involved an examination and rethinking of what seems to be a basic assumption about how libraries should be used and by whom. When a digital library is receiving heavy use, each individual user is wandering as lonely as a cloud, oblivious to other digital library users and unable to communicate easily and effectively with them. One way to understand the Library 2.0 movement is as an attempt to integrate the value of conversation and crowds into the underlying architecture of librarianship.

Since the mid-19th century lots of things have developed to unsettle and

unseat the romantic spirit—world wars, totalitarianism, communism, and the like. The most recent Johnny-come-lately may be social networking. Although the overt goal of the social networking movement is not to diminish the value and influence of the romantic ideal on actual society, it may succeed where wars and top-down social engineering have failed. Social networking certainly is not bellicose, and it probably will not go down in history as yet another failed experiment in trying to develop a new way to organize society. Social networking is all about interacting with others, group behavior, the wisdom of crowds, and similar group phenomena and processes. In this sense, social networking is anti-romantic and presents a profound challenge to libraries.

Social Knowing

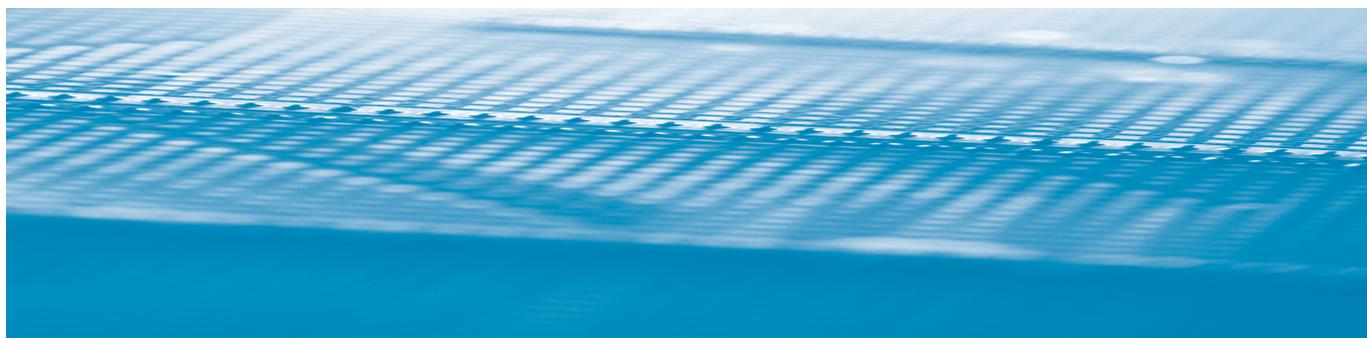
In his recent book, *Everything Is Miscellaneous: The Power of the New Digital Disorder*, David Weinberger goes so far as to suggest that knowing and knowl-

edge itself may be tilting toward becoming a group process, not an individual act pursued in implicit solitude. In the emerging era in which what Weinberger calls the “third order of order” will dominate (i.e., in which the messiness of the miscellaneous becomes a value), knowledge generation will occur not primarily in the brain of a single individual, but in the conversations—conducted primarily online—between two or more individuals. “The knowledge exists between the contributors. It is knowledge that has no knower. Social knowing changes *who* does the knowing and *how*, more than it changes the *what* of knowledge.” (pp.143–144)

Most traditional libraries assume that the pursuit of information and knowledge is primarily a solitary process pursued by individuals. Libraries provide the bliss of solitude. How libraries, library collections, library services, and library systems may want or need to change to facilitate social knowing should lead to some healthy discussions among information professionals for years to come.—Tom Peters

More Info. @:

Wordsworth’s Poem: www.bartleby.com/145/ww260.html



CIC Consortium Joins Google Scan

Google has been very successful in reaching bilateral agreements with major research libraries in the U.S. and abroad to scan all or significant portions of their book collections. The result is a truly massive digitization project. It is too soon to judge the nature and extent of the benefits that scholarship and humanity in general will realize from this project.

In early June Google accelerated the agreements pace by announcing an agreement with the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC), an academic consortium of the eleven Big Ten universities (the addition of Penn State created that anomaly) (Michigan, Ohio State, Indiana, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, etc.) plus the University of Chicago. Google now has over two dozen university partners involved in this project.

The Google team will work with the twelve CIC universities to scan selected portions of their research collections, probably close to ten million volumes for the group.

Are other library consortia negotiating with Google? It's unclear what is the advantage here to the member institutions in acting consortially. Certainly, negotiating as a group of twelve research universities, especially because the University of Michigan and UW-Madison had already done the deed with Google, probably resulted in some process efficiencies. The CIC press release notes, "The new CIC agreement does not affect or supersede those earlier agreements but will complement and extend the digitization already underway." The CIC will receive digital copies of each scanned volume, although the agreement stipulates that in-copyright books will be held in escrow, which has created much speculation and comment in the biblioblog-

sphere. The CIC plans to build a shared repository with their copies.

A blog post by Lorcan Dempsey from OCLC makes an interesting point about the value of collaborative action in this particular instance. Although most or all of the agreements Google has negotiated with the "Google 25" stipulates that the library will receive digital copies of each book scanned from its collection, universities that negotiated bilateral agreements with Google will receive only their copies. The universities will receive the parts, and Google will have the sum of the parts. Lorcan notes, "...it is difficult, and maybe not very sensible, for the libraries to individually invest in some types of service development. An important factor here is that they cannot benefit from the network effects that arise in larger collections and so are limited in the range of service that they could individually develop. This points again to issues of collaborative sourcing."

The statement contained in the CIC press release from President-Elect Michael McRobbie at Indiana University provides one big picture view of the value of consortial collaboration in this area, "Leading universities will leverage assets collectively even as we continue to build core individual competencies, and we must operate effectively in a common virtual environment." If universities want to operate effectively and to continue to remain social and cultural leaders in the emerging online world of scholarship, which I hope becomes and remains a more level virtual playing field, they will need to collaborate intensively.

The CIC is a well-established, proud consortium with a rich history of collaboration. They taken a bold step into the future by announcing plans to create a massive shared repository of scanned scholarly books. But this announcement

begs the question: Why not create a new consortium that includes all the universities involved in Google Scan? Even if the number of participating libraries remains fixed at the current 25 (bloody unlikely), when the CIC project is complete it will contain only approximately half of the books that Google will have. If all the Google partner libraries pooled the public domain scanned books they receive back from the Google scanning effort, then collaborated to create great scholarly and public good benefits from those millions of scanned books, then the digital gridiron truly would be level, rather than slanted toward Mountain View and other points on the West Coast, which often seems to be the case when a Big Ten football team plays in the Rose Bowl.—*Tom Peters*

More Info. @:

Google's Press Release: www.google.com/intl/en/press/annc/books_cic.html

CIC Press Release: www.cic.uiuc.edu/programs/CenterForLibraryInitiatives/Archive/PressRelease/LibraryDigitization/PressReleaseFinal6-5-07REV.pdf

Lorcan Dempsey's Blog Post: <http://orweblog.oclc.org/archives/001366.html>

Google Book Search: <http://books.google.com>

Peter Brantley's blog post: http://blogs.lib.berkeley.edu/shimenawa.php/2007/06/13/monetizing_libraries

Agreement between Google and the CIC: www.cic.uiuc.edu/programs/CenterForLibraryInitiatives/Archive/PressRelease/LibraryDigitization

Ocarina: The Open Content Alliance

If the Open Content Alliance (OCA) has not selected a logo yet, I recommend they adopt the ocarina. Not only is it one of the few words in the English language that begins with “oca,” but also it is a beautiful instrument that has been used by humans for millennia. It’s a simple instrument of the folk, with deep and varied cultural roots. If you are wracking your brain, trying to remember if you’ve ever heard an ocarina being played, conjure in your mind’s ear the flute-like solo in the middle of the song “Wild Thing” by The Troggs.

In late May I had an opportunity to speak with Brewster Kahle of the Internet Archive, which serves as the organizational home for the OCA initiative. The OCA website describes the alliance as “...made up of cultural, technology, nonprofit, and governmental organizations from around the world, which will offer broad, public access to a rich panorama of world culture by building a permanent archive of multilingual digitized text and multimedia content.”

In many ways, the OCA can be understood as an alternative method and vision to Google’s book scanning project. Kahle is concerned that the Google project may lock up digital access to public domain books. The OCA is an alliance of informal partnerships involving universities, research libraries, archives, technology companies, charitable foundations, library consortia, and the like. Even the Missouri Botanical Garden is a partner in the OCA. These organizations commit to providing something—collections, services, facilities, tools, funding—to the OCA initiative.

Brewster noted that, while the OCA was announced in October 2005 as a massive book scanning system and a vision for an open library, their book scanning system got into full production late in 2006 when they were able to achieve the ten cents per page production benchmark. The actual scanners, who tend to be young people who just graduated from college, are employed by the Internet Archive, but the partner libraries are very much involved, and the scanning is done in the libraries. They currently have eight regional scanning centers in the U.S., Canada, and the UK.

By May 2007 the project already had over 200,000 scanned books in its master collection, and they are scanning at the rate of 12,000 per month.

The project already has received several major contributions from charitable foundations, such as the Sloan Foundation and the Hewlett Foundation. Brewster is pleased to see that charitable foundations are stepping up to the plate to support the project, perhaps to counterbalance the investments being made by venture capitalists in the massive digitization project spearheaded by Google.

In late May Carnegie Mellon University announced a related initiative called reCAPTCHAs that will develop a new digitization technique that should decrease the error rate experienced by most current optical character recognition systems. The new technology will be used as a new type of CAPTCHA test—those fuzzy and distorted character sets that humans need to squint and decipher in order to prove that they are indeed humans. In a brilliant stroke of multi-tasking, the reCAPTCHA challenges will be based on actual scanning problems from books being scanned for the OCA. By solving reCAPTCHA visual puzzles, users will not only be proving that they are human, but also helping to clean up OCR’d OCA texts.

When I asked Kahle about the future of the book as a form of human utterance, not as a printed object, he was optimistic. He thought that well thought out and formatted long-form essays and narratives, usually by single authors, would continue to be valuable. Unlike other forms of expression, such as music and film, books do not take millions of dollars to produce. We just need to become a little more multi-modal in our thinking about book-length treatments.

We also talked about the future of libraries as the OCA, Google Book Search, and other mass scanning projects come to fruition. Kahle thought that libraries would need to become more topically specialized in what they collect and promote themselves to a much broader geographic area of users than do most current libraries. Brewster thinks that the next big

area of effort for the OCA and libraries alike is to work on developing and fine-tuning online services, search tools, and user interfaces so that we can compete with commercial ventures focused on digital information.

Brewster is very keen on the Encyclopedia of Life project as a prototype of how cultural institutions and the organizations and individuals that support them can collaborate online to create a rich, useful resource for the good of scholarship, teaching, learning, and the general public.—*Tom Peters*

More Info. @:

Open Content Alliance: <http://www.opencontentalliance.org/>

Internet Archive: <http://www.archive.org>

Carnegie Mellon University Press Release: http://www.cmu.edu/news/archive/2007/May/may24_recaptcha.shtml

Encyclopedia of Life: www.eol.org

ScienceDirect Tries eBooks

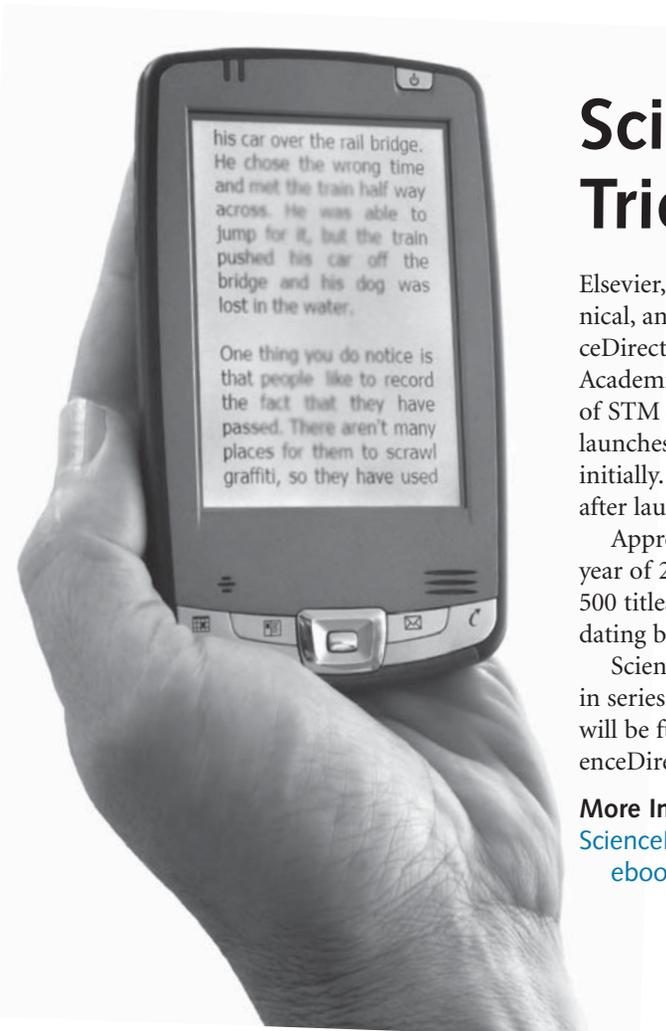
Elsevier, a leading for-profit (and how) publisher of STM (scientific, technical, and medical) information, has begun beta testing ebooks in ScienceDirect. The trial package of over five hundred ebooks, generally with the Academic Press and Elsevier imprints, include ebooks from a wide range of STM disciplines, from agriculture to psychology. When the full service launches later in 2007, Elsevier hopes to make over 4,000 ebooks available initially. They plan to add at least fifty ebooks per month to the collection after launch.

Approximately sixty of the five hundred trial ebooks had a publication year of 2006, with another sixty first published in 2005. About 440 of the 500 titles were published in 2000 or later, with a smattering of older titles dating back to 1995.

ScienceDirect already contains reference works, handbooks, and books in series, as well as journal literature, of course. The new ebook collection will be fully searchable and linked to the other format components in ScienceDirect.—*Tom Peters*

More Info. @:

ScienceDirect eBooks: <http://info.sciencedirect.com/content/books/ebooks>



British Columbia Launches Open Source Evergreen ILS Project

The open source ILS movement takes another step forward as the province of British Columbia in Canada launches an initiative to implement Evergreen. The Georgia Public Library System developed Evergreen as an open source library automation system to serve the 252 libraries in the PINES consortium. The PINES libraries migrated from SirsiDynix Unicorn to Evergreen on September 5, 2006 following a twenty-six month development process. While many other libraries have expressed interest in Evergreen, the British Columbia libraries are the first, following PINES, to formally approve and fund an implementation effort.

At its April 17, 2007 meeting, the Association of British Columbia Library Directors and the Public Library Services Branch (PLSB), an agency of the provincial government, agreed to begin the implementation of the Evergreen ILS that can be shared by all the libraries in the province. PLSB will contribute \$1 million in seed money towards the project, which will ultimately be governed by the British Columbia public library community.

British Columbia includes 241 individual libraries (including branches) representing 75 autonomous library authorities. This group resembles those involved in the Georgia PINES implementation of Evergreen both in terms of the number of libraries involved and the demographics of rural and urban areas represented.

Unlike the PINES consortium in Georgia, the British Columbia libraries will follow a more gradual process in moving to Evergreen. British Colum-

bia will follow an opt-in model, where libraries will migrate to Evergreen on their own schedules. An initial group of three libraries plans to migrate to Evergreen by October 2007. This group will include Prince Rupert Public Library, which currently runs Dynix Classic, Powell River Public Library (Eloquent), and Fort Nelson Public Library (Mandarin M3). Following this initial group, another twenty libraries, including some multi-branch libraries, have committed to moving to Evergreen in the first year. As libraries throughout the province reach the expiration dates of the contracts with their existing automation vendors, they will have the option of shifting to the Evergreen system. Over the next three to five year period, we can expect a high percentage of the British Columbia libraries to participate.

The decision to follow a strategy based on a single shared province-wide ILS came about, at least indirectly, as a result of the SirsiDynix decision to discontinue the development of Horizon 8.0. As part of efforts related to the strategic planning effort, PLSB was in the process of guiding six library federations, pre-federations, or quasi-federations in the province toward the procurement of state-of-the-art, standards-compliant, modern integrated library automation systems.

High on the list of requirements for the new ILS included the ability to accommodate the needs of multi-type consortia. Each of the federations included at least one non-public library member. Some of these federations were newly formed, with member libraries possessing minimal automation pro-

grams; others member libraries had legacy systems in need of replacement. Most of the federations were on track toward the selection of Horizon 8.0 when SirsiDynix announced that product's demise in March 2007. The North Coast Library Federation, for example, was about a week away from formalizing its selection of Horizon 8.0. This event caused PLSB to reconsider the available ILS options.

The SirsiDynix announcement changed the landscape of the ILS marketplace; the traditional ILS market is no longer a haven for the risk adverse. (BC Pines Talking Points <http://pines.bclibrary.ca/resources/talking-points>)

According to Ben Hyman, Manager of Technology & Policy at PLSB, the move to the province-wide shared ILS falls in the context of the province's strategic plan for its libraries: "Libraries without walls: the world within your reach." In addition to the shared database, this strategic plan provides the impetus for a number of other activities, including a single province-wide library card, the AskAway virtual reference service, a common authentication service, the procurement of electronic content products, and other activities to improve library services.

The work done to guide the federations toward the procurement of shared automated systems that would serve each group of libraries engendered a sense of collaboration and cooperation among the libraries. This effort paved the way toward a single provincial solution. For larger libraries in the province,

the development and installation of Evergreen in British Columbia will serve as insurance against the vagaries of the vendor market, and will broaden the available ILS options for their next ILS selection and migration process.

Though facilitated through PLSB, the British Columbia Evergreen implementation came about through a grass-roots process. This new automation system will be owned, governed, operated, and maintained by the community of libraries it serves. In British Columbia, the bulk of the funding for libraries comes from local governments. This funding model requires a strong sense of buy-in from the participating libraries, compared to more centrally funded initiatives. The success of the project depends on support and participation by the individual libraries in the province.

As a centrally hosted system shared by a growing set of libraries throughout

the province, PLSB anticipates lower automation costs for each library compared to purchasing commercial systems from an ILS vendor. Many of the costs associated with local ILS systems will be saved through the centrally hosted model. Using open source software will eliminate software licensing costs.

A new company, called Equinox, was recently formed to provide support and services for Evergreen. The principles of this company come from Georgia PINES Library System, the original developers of Evergreen. While PLSB has not entered into a formal arrangement with Equinox for its services, it is in discussions with Equinox, and may at a future point. PLSB will build its own team to implement, support, and develop Evergreen. The British Columbia implementation will also take advantage of the technical expertise available in other Canadian

libraries. The University of Windsor, for example, has begun development of an acquisitions module for Evergreen, in preparation for its anticipated Fall 2008 migration.

The commitment of the British Columbia libraries to move to a province-wide implementation of Evergreen takes the open source ILS movement a step forward. While the number of libraries involved in open source ILS implementations remains very small relative to those running commercial systems, momentum continues to build. Over the next few years, the small stand of pines currently involved in open source automation systems such as Evergreen may expand into a forest.—*Marshall Breeding*

More Info. @:

Georgia PINES: <http://gapines.org>
Equinox Software: <http://esilibrary.com/esi/home.html>

Ex Libris Appoints New President of Its North American Division

Ex Libris has appointed Robert J. Mercer as President of its North American subsidiary, replacing Dan Trajman. This subsidiary is part of the Ex Libris Group, a global company headquartered in Israel. Matti Shem-Tov continues as President and CEO of Ex Libris Group. Ex Libris Group is a wholly owned portfolio company of Francisco Partners.

Trajman served as President from March 1, 2004 through May 2007. Trajman will continue to serve Ex Libris in a consulting capacity through the end of 2007.

Mercer comes to Ex Libris from SAS Institute, Inc., a developer of statistical analysis and business intelligence

systems. At SAS, Mercer rose through a progression of positions, most recently serving as Vice President and General Manager of SAS Latin America and the Caribbean. Prior to SAS, Mercer held positions at Dell.

The appointment of Mercer represents a minor transition at Ex Libris and does not seem to be indicative of a significant change in direction for the company.

—*Marshall Breeding*

More Info. @:

Ex Libris Press Release: <http://www.exlibrisgroup.com/newsdetails.htm?nid=532>