

Minutes for LES Collections Discussion Group – ALA Midwinter Meeting  
January 25, 2009  
Denver Marriott City Center, Colorado BR E

1. Welcome from Convener Faye Christenberry and introductions.

2. Digital Archives & E-Books: Implications for Collections

Do others feel that digital archives are secure enough to justify the withdrawal of back runs of print journals? Are factors such as mass digitization and the recession leading others to cut back on buying books in paper? Are people buying more e-books? If so, in what circumstances are e-books preferable to print? Educause published an interesting report in January 2008 called "E-Books in Higher Education: Nearing the End of the Era of Hype?"

(<http://connect.educause.edu/Library/ECAR/EBooksInHigherEducationNe/45853>) that predicts higher education will be at the forefront of "the wave of e-book adoption over the next two years." Still, surveys indicate that both faculty and students prefer "p-books" over "e-books" for "leisure reading. . . ."

Christenberry started the discussion by asking if, given the emphasis on e-books and the cost of large packages, we should stop buying print. Her answer affirms the fact that print is still necessary since e-book stability has yet to be proven and we don't want gaps in such key resources as Oxford reference titles. Some librarians felt that e-reference titles are preferable to print because they can be searched and are available any time/any place. However many literature reference titles are available only in print or are easier to use in print. Faculty tend to prefer paper copies of scholarly books. E-book archives such as EEBO and ECCO are welcome since libraries cannot collect the titles in print.

The business model for e-books can be problematic for copyright reasons. Some allow only one "check-out" at a time or charge more for multiple users. The question of lending e-books to other libraries or consortial partners can be complicated. Most libraries do not lend e-books. Most libraries exist to share information, so not being able to lend is against our ethos.

Several participants told stories of undergraduates who say, "Show me the books." They enjoy browsing and the serendipity that can result. The tangibility factor is important. One participant shared the story of a graduate student who requested that the library subscribe to the literature titles in Blackwell Reference Online; the student wanted both the print and e-versions so she could search the online and read the print.

Incorporating e-books into library collections may be akin to what happened with e-journals; at first libraries paid for print and electronic the economic forces led to the cancellation of the print. Journal articles are easy to print and read; books are not.

Some faculty want their students to master the technology of the book, an impossibility online. English literature is dependent on print and text where the user flips backward and forward in the texts and goes to the Notes. One participant's daughter is a graduate student in computer science; when she needs to read an entire book, she prints it out.

Books show wear if they're used, a clue to importance. Print gives context.

Another anecdote: a young student in an instruction class said that sitting in front of a screen is overrated.

Texas A & M bought forty Kindles and lent them to staff to try out the technology and the experience of reading an entire book on the device. Using a Kindle is handy for leisure reading because one can easily download 200 books into it. It's useless for scholarly research, though, because of the lack of page numbers and title page. The user can take notes but not cite because of the lack of pagination. In addition to being able to search text, Kindles allows taking notes and uploading Word files.

Vendor packages must be examined closely to see that the titles included are worthwhile and comparing packages is difficult. E-Books allow the user to take notes, but after graduation or a certain amount of time without consulting the book, the student loses the notes.

Google Books is the elephant in the room. How the proposed settlement

<http://books.google.com/booksrightsholders/>

to the publisher lawsuit will affect academic libraries and users is yet to be seen. The settlement is so complicated that the Association for Research Libraries published Jonathan Band's *A Guide for the Perplexed: Libraries and the Google Library Project Settlement*, which is online at:

<http://www.arl.org/bm~doc/google-settlement-13nov08.pdf>

Note pages 4-6 which highlight free services for users and pages 6-7 which show fee-based services.

Users will want to print books, so many libraries are watching the Espresso Book Machine demo at the University of Michigan (see <http://www.lib.umich.edu/ebm/>). If we can print digital books, then we can put them on the shelves. Reliance on Google scanning can be problematic since foldouts and other materials may not be included. The literature notes many complaints about the quality of Google scanning, but Google is making thousands of e-books books available. One panel at the recent convention of the Modern Language Association noted that scholars are using Google snippets as an index and then reading the print texts.

Many users do not want to read entire books on the screen or spend the time and paper to print out a personal copy. Users may resort to interlibrary loan to borrow paper copies of books when their library owns only the e-book. Students often print out e-reserves because they do not want to read online. Even the e-generation wants print.

Libraries with space constraints are resorting to e-books. Another benefit is that students don't have to wait for recalls when the library has the e-book.

In an effort to foresee potential difficulties with e-books, conversation centered on JSTOR experiences. Many libraries are tossing their print copies, but a dark archive on a fault line causes a certain amount of worry. Library literature shows the problems.

One librarian was credited with a book review written by someone else because the Gale (LRC) version of the page left out the other person's name. Administrators under pressure to save space and money often apply pressure to dispose of print.

Many questions remain to be solved. One such is which titles to catalog in resources such as MyiLibrary where the library buys the title only if several students use.

### 3. Balancing Selection Areas With Limited Budgets:

How do people balance what they buy, in terms of all the areas that are covered in most English/Literature departments? In addition to purchasing scholarly materials for the different time periods and countries, how do people allocate funds to adequately cover primary literature, Linguistics, Technical Writing, Rhetoric and Composition, Creative Writing?

Balancing is difficult and involves looking at departmental needs. Re-balancing is crucial since these faculty and courses change and new programs bring different needs.

Coping strategies:

- Faculty advice, though some faculty may not consider needs of their colleagues or of future research. One librarian coping with a 25% reduction in monograph funds was advised by a faculty member to cease collecting contemporary literature because only one person in the department studied it. What kind of research library does not collect modern literature? We all take informed risks when we decide to buy titles we think will be needed for future research.
- Buying even good presses selectively, for example perhaps concentrating only on prize-winners in poetry.
- Using data gathered by usage statistics, including the scanning of books taken off the shelves but not checked out.
- Not buying any first works.
- Asking faculty whether to buy expensive titles in their areas.
- Library committees can give helpful advice and also be useful in educating the faculty and students about what the library can/cannot do. Some librarians meet regularly with their committees while others meet only to discuss serial cancellations.
- Negotiating prices down because of serious budget constraints; tell vendors the library will cancel unless the price is reduced.
- Annual reviews rather than massive irregular cuts

Not buying a title can cost the library more than making an interlibrary loan since such transactions cost \$26 or more.

### 4. Other Topics

Kathy Johnson is Chair of LES Planning and is gathering "discomfort areas and issues" in preparation for writing the LES action plan for areas requiring funding or meeting ACRL's Strategic Plan. One idea may be finding ways to make contact with other professional organizations. The current LES strategic plan has nothing about IT. What needs to be done? We can ask for funding. One possibility might be to ask for money to hire someone to compare the various e-book packages.