

Update on the Digital Content & Libraries Initiative

ALA Executive Board Meeting
October 27, 2012

Report by Maureen Sullivan, ALA President; Robert Wolven, Co-chair, DCWG (via telephone); and Alan Inouye, OITP Director (via telephone).

ANALYTICAL WORK

- On August 8 [released](#) “Ebook Business Models for Public Libraries,” a [report](#) that describes general features and attributes of the current ebook environment and outlines constraints and restrictions of current business models.
- On September 10 [co-released](#) a [report](#) on the pricing of ebooks, which was compiled by Douglas County (Colo.) Libraries. This report illuminates the radical differences between consumer and library pricing for best-seller trade ebooks.
- On October 10 [released](#) “E-books and Libraries: An Economic Perspective,” a [report](#) by Drs. Stanley M. Besen and Sheila Nataraj Kirby that was commissioned by ALA. This report explores and explains some of the economic underpinnings for the pricing of ebooks.
- The Digital Content & Libraries Working Group (DCWG) is developing a report on ranking the attributes of ebook business models, and briefs on specific business model scenarios. Additionally, background work is underway on accessibility issues and the school library market.

OUTREACH TO PUBLISHERS, AUTHORS, AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC

- On August 28 Carrie Russell, OITP Program Director, was a guest panelist on the [Diane Rehm Show](#). DCWG member Vailey Oehlke also participated in this session that focused on ebooks and library lending.
- On September 14, ALA publicly [challenged](#) Hachette’s announced large price increase for library ebooks, unveiling a more assertive ALA stance with respect to publishers.
- On September 24, Maureen Sullivan released “[An Open Letter to Publishers](#),” which articulates the value of libraries in the publishing ecosystem and especially criticizes those publishers that won’t sell their ebooks to libraries at all. This letter elicited strong responses from the publishing community, including a [reply](#) from the Association of American Publishers (AAP).
- On September 27-28, Maureen Sullivan led an ALA delegation to [New York City](#). This trip included a [session](#) at the headquarters of AAP that was attended by about 100 staff from publishing houses. The delegation, which included President-elect Barbara Stripling, Immediate Past-president Molly Raphael, Robert Wolven, and Alan Inouye, also had separate meetings with Rosen Publishing, Scholastic, Random House, HarperCollins, Penguin, and Hachette.
- The New York meetings stimulated a number of promising follow-ups, both on ebook matters and on some larger communication and advocacy possibilities.
- Author engagement is on the table for increasing focus in the next few months. We are contemplating a wide array of possibilities, from personal author communications to their publishers to published letters or interviews.

DIRECT SUPPORT FOR ALA MEMBERS/LIBRARIANS

- Work on the media and communications toolkit for librarians was put on hold for several weeks as we focused on the more assertive stance and the direct implications for ALA communications and planning for the New York meetings. We have resumed work on the toolkit, with expected release around the end of November. The toolkit will provide librarians with templates to support a variety of advocacy activities such as issuing a press release, obtaining op-ed placement in the local newspaper, writing letters to the editor, and working with the media in general.
- On October 16, formally [announced](#) a new [website](#) “Ebooks & Digital Content,” a component of the Transforming Libraries site. The new website provides access to a wide array of ALA-produced and other resources, which will be maintained and improved by the Office for Research & Statistics and the DCWG. This website complements our use of the *American Libraries* [E-Content blog](#), our primary mechanism and repository for DCWG public communications, which stands at 85 posts as of October 22.

WORKING WITH THE LARGER LIBRARY COMMUNITY

- OCLC/The Big Shift. ALA and PLA are [partners](#) on this project and have participated in several conference calls and provided input on a survey expected to be administered in a few weeks. DCWG Co-chair Sari Feldman and Alan Inouye represent ALA and Vailey Oehlke represents PLA. A workshop is being planned immediately prior to the 2013 Midwinter Meeting and the final report is expected in May 2013.
- ReadersFirst initiative. Sari Feldman is a member of the leadership group of this initiative, which is in the organizational stage of its development.
- Digital Public Library of America (DPLA). Maureen Sullivan and Alan Inouye (and others) support and monitor DPLA activities for ALA. While not directly relevant to the current ebook interests of the DCWG, DPLA developments are pertinent to the larger mission of the Working Group.
- ALA continues to participate in the advisory group for the Pew studies on libraries and digital content funded by the Gates Foundation. OITP Program Director Larra Clark and ALA Councilor-at-large Bobbi Newman serve on this group.
- Berkman Center. Maureen Sullivan continues to work with colleagues at the Berkman Center to explore further work on ebooks and libraries and the broader issues concerning digital content.

PLANNING

- Initial plans for PLA advocacy and communication in the digital content/ebook space expected in the next several weeks.
- Continuing to develop plans for broader engagement of digital content issues beyond the Big Six trade publishers.
- ALA leadership may be meeting with publishing-related organizations in mid-December 2012, because the presidents already will be in New York City for I Love My Librarian festivities.
- 2013 Midwinter Meeting: The DCWG will have a program on Saturday, 1:00 – 2:30 p.m. and a business meeting on Saturday, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.
- Several tip sheets are in-process and are expected to be released in the next several months.
- Planning to issue an *American Libraries* supplement on digital content in May 2013.