

# Cites & Insights

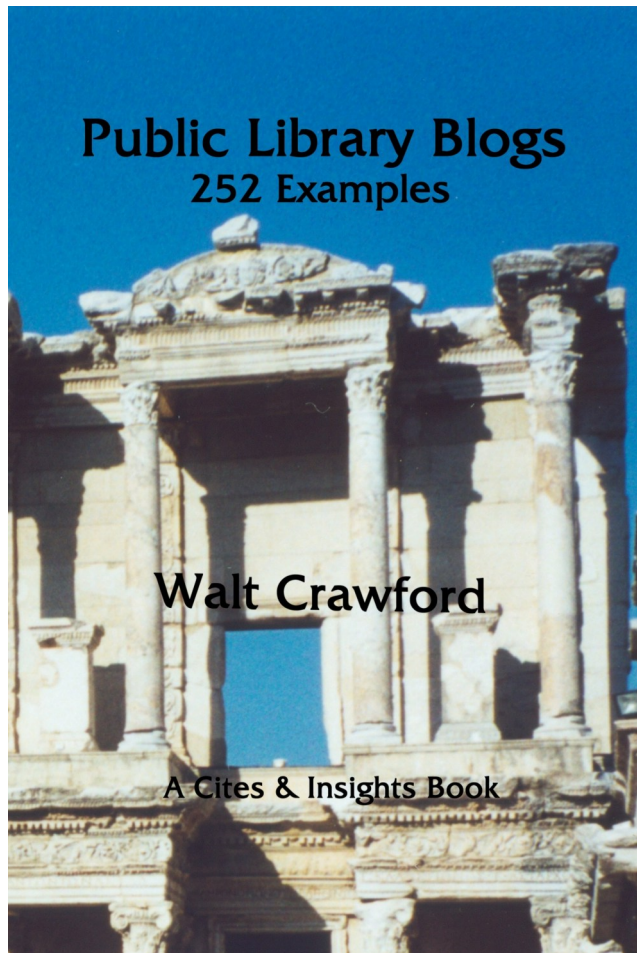
Crawford at Large  
Libraries • Policy • Technology • Media

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Volume 7, Number 11: October 2007

ISSN 1534-0937

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It's here: *Public Library Blogs: 252 Examples*.

The 299-page 6x9 trade paperback (x+289 pages) features descriptions and sample posts for a wide range of blogs from 196 public libraries of all sizes, in the United States, Canada, Australia, Ireland and New Zealand.

You can buy the paperback with a great cover and cream heavyweight “book paper” interior pages for \$29.50 plus shipping from the Cites & Insights bookstore at lulu.com (lulu.com/waltcrawford). If you haven't already purchased *Balanced Libraries: Thoughts on Continuity and Change* (and clearly most of you haven't—no more than 125 personal copies have sold as

of mid-September, based on Worldcat.org holdings and actual sales), it's the same price, same place.

If you prefer bright white heavyweight interior pages and don't mind a cover that may not be quite as crisp or have quite the right colors, or if you want to save a few bucks on postage and handling, or just don't want to open a Lulu account—the book is also available at Amazon.com, same price, as is *Balanced Libraries*. (Only Amazon.com, not Amazon's international subsidiaries.) “Search Inside the Book” has been activated so you can see sample pages (as you can at Lulu.com). At Amazon, the ISBN is 978-1434805591 (the ISBN for *Balanced Libraries* is 978-1434805256)—the Lulu versions don't have ISBNs. You can also buy the versions with ISBNs from CreateSpace.com, technically the publisher of record for the ISBN. (For more about this and an update on my Lulu experience, see the final section of this essay.)

The book's been out since August 25, 2007—and I'm delighted to say Worldcat.org already shows three library holdings, two of which do *not* have blogs in the book.

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## Why This Book?

Here's part of Chapter One:

The purpose of this book is to guide you to blogs that you might find useful when thinking about your own library's case—blogs from nearby libraries, blogs from libraries with similar service populations, or blogs that specialize in topics or work in ways that you'll find interesting.

Most of this book is examples: 252 blogs from 196 libraries, arranged geographically. It's not a comprehensive survey (and I did exclude non-English blogs for reasons of practicality), but I did attempt complete cov-

erage within a few basic criteria. I was impressed by the diversity and quality of what's out there.

Public libraries vary enormously in service size, funding and staff resources. What works for a library serving half a million people with \$120 per cap funding may seem wholly out of reach for a library serving 7,000 people with \$20 per cap funding (or, for that matter, for a library serving 7,000 people with \$120 per cap funding but the smaller staff likely in that library).

What's here? Public library blogs that were listed in one of the two primary wiki lists of public library blogs as of May 2007 and that met a few basic criteria:

- In English
- Started before 2007 (since "young" blogs have a high failure rate and I'm interested in showing plausible successes)
- Have at least one post in two of the three "study months," March, April and May 2007
- Appear to be a blog in most key respects, or to be a blog portion of a library home page (in some cases, the blog is the homepage)

That resulted in 209 blogs from 196 libraries. I went back to each library and added other blogs (43 in all, never more than five blogs from one library) that met the criteria but weren't listed in the wikis.

If your library is considering a blog, this book should help you find blogs from comparable libraries as examples. If your library has a blog and is considering more (or revising the ones you have), this book should help you find interesting examples—the public library blogging community is remarkably diverse!

There are two fairly remarkable blogs at libraries serving fewer than 400 people. There are more teen blogs than you can shake a dazzling banner design at, along with genealogy blogs, a bunch of book review blogs, quite a few blogs for kidlit and children's events...and lots more.

I was impressed and delighted by what I found doing the survey. I believe many public librarians will find inspiration and places to look in its pages—and will be able to find a few blogs to check out a lot more easily than plowing through 358 blog links (not including duplicates) in the wikis.

## Who's There?

Here's the range of service area populations for the 196 libraries:

- Under 1,000 (under 400): two libraries
- 1,000 to 2,400: five libraries
- 2,500 to 4,600: eight libraries
- 5,000 to 9,900: 17 libraries
- 10,000 to 15,000: 16 libraries
- 16,000 to 24,000: 20 libraries

- 25,000 to 33,000: 20 libraries
- 34,000 to 46,000: 17 libraries
- 51,000 to 69,000: 17 libraries
- 75,000 to 97,000: 11 libraries
- 100,000 to 137,000: 19 libraries
- 146,000 to 240,000: 21 libraries
- 260,000 to 497,000: 10 libraries
- More than 670,000: 13 libraries

Libraries are included for these Zip and postal codes:

- 01301, 01557, 01702, 01824, 02048, 02090, 02188, 02330, 02347, 02459, 02860, 02895, 03060, 03743, 03773, 03820, 03842, 03849, 04030, 05301, 06096, 06111, 06426, 06810, 06820, 06850, 06870, 06880, 07753, 07764, 07922, 08043, 08525, 08542, 08831, 08857, 08865, 08904
- 10924, 11576, 11743, 11747, 11772, 11795, 12074, 14103, 14203, 14468, 14489, 14551, 14569, 14850, 15102, 15213, 16743, 18350, 19082, 19083, 19103, 19380, 19543, 19602
- 20186, 20912, 21017, 22922, 27203, 27263, 27530, 29506
- 31906, 32801, 33401, 33755, 35203, 38111, 39043
- 40004, 40475, 40769, 41011, 43050, 43085, 44087, 45133, 45202, 45419, 46410, 46511, 46601, 46703, 46802, 46923, 47250, 48104, 48170, 48218, 48730, 48917, 49242, 49440, 49503
- 50613, 50701, 53010, 53040, 53119, 53703, 54901, 54911, 54930, 54952, 54963, 54967, 55305, 55746, 55981, 56007, 56649, 58102
- 60053, 60067, 60068, 60077, 60091, 60106, 60172, 60190, 60410, 60438, 60462, 60477, 60491, 60513, 60521, 60526, 60901, 61401, 65801, 66049, 66061, 66101, 66212, 66523, 66550, 66604, 66801, 67357, 67701
- 70501, 74003, 74501, 75491, 76092, 77054, 78701
- 80903, 87501, 89012
- 90620, 91502, 92501, 92648, 93721, 93940, 94063, 94086, 94102, 94903, 95032, 95678, 97005, 98446, 98503, 99663, 99801
- K0K 2K0, K7L 1X8, L0S 1E0, L3Z 2A7, L4J 8C1, L4P 3P7, M4W 2G8, N1H 4J6, N1S 2K6, N2L 5E2, S6V 1B7, T1R 1B9, T8N 3Z9, V8W 3H2
- Outside North America: Australia: Casey-Cardinia, Eastern Regional, Sutherland Shire, Yarra Plenty; Ireland: Galway; New Zealand: Wellington

## Varieties of Blog

So what varieties of blogs are in the book?

No, I don't mean how many use WordPress or Blogger or whatever. I didn't record that. It didn't seem particularly relevant in this case.

I mean what the blog's "about." The most common category is "General": multipurpose blogs not aimed at a particular age group that include library news and hours, events, new material, reviews, what have you. These include several cases where the library website is a blog or where the blog feeds directly into the library's home page.

Ninetyseven of the blogs fall into the General category, including both of the blogs for libraries serving fewer than 1,000. Other categories.

- Books (new books & summaries): Eight blogs
- Books and more (primarily books but some related posts): Seven blogs
- Book clubs and discussion groups: Six blogs
- Book reviews (sometimes including book clubs, but primarily reviews): Twelve blogs
- Reviews of all sorts of material: Four blogs
- Movies and music: Four blogs
- New item lists with little or no annotation: Three blogs
- New materials, including lists and discussions: Five blogs
- Director's blogs: Eleven blogs
- Library events: Ten blogs
- Genealogy: Four blogs
- Technology: Six blogs
- Children and KidLit: Eight blogs
- Teens: 36 blogs!
- Tweens: One blog
- Young adults (which could, of course, be teens): Six blogs
- Adult literacy: One blog
- Censorship and banned books: One blog
- Websites of interest: Two blogs
- Community, city, state posts: Two blogs
- Construction projects: Two blogs
- Digital collections: One blog
- Essays (that didn't seem to fit any other category): Two blogs
- Friends of the Library: One blog
- Gaming: One blog
- Job advice: One blog
- Library staff: Three blogs
- Local history: One blog
- Nonprofits: One blog
- Parents: One blog
- Podcasts: One blog
- Readers' Advisory: One blog
- Reference: Three blogs

Two paragraphs of Chapter Two, immediately following a detailed list of blogs by type:

The lists above should challenge some of your assumptions as to what smaller libraries can and can't do. Book review blogs when your library serves fewer than 15,000? See 46923, 06096, 02090. Do directors of under-20,000-user libraries do their own blogs? Maybe even 10,000! See 05301, 06820, 10924, 60521—and, a little larger, the remarkable back-and-forth blog at 60901.

Surely only larger libraries could devote blogs to genealogy? 46511: Service area 3,100. A children's book blog from a 9,100-person library: 45419. Teen blogs for libraries of under 20,000? Eight of them—go look at the list (and don't forget the YA blog for a library serving 8,700 people).

What will work for your library and serve your community? That's up to you to determine—but these examples may help.

## The Metrics

*Public Library Blogs: 252 Examples* demonstrates again what appears to be true of any group of blogs: There is no such thing as an average blog—and they vary so much that the mean and median for any given measure tend to be quite different.

So it is with these 252 blogs. Here, then, the metrics I used (all based on posts during March, April and May 2007), with the mean (the average of all blogs), the median (the point at which half the blogs have a higher number and half have a lower), and the limit for "outliers"—usually the top quintile (20%) for a given measure. The book lists outliers for each measure. Within the descriptions that make up the bulk of the book (of which metrics are a tiny part), metrics always appear—and they're boldfaced (or, in one special case, italicized) if they're outliers.

- **Frequency** (number of posts): The mean is 23.7 posts, roughly two per week—but the median is 12.0 posts, just under one per week. The top 20% have 33 or more posts during the 92-day quarter. (If you're wondering, 10 average at least one post a day.)
- **Comments**: The mean is 4.5 comments—but the median is zero, since only 118 of the blogs had any comments at all, and 25 of those had one comment each during the quarter. Quite a few don't allow comments, generally for sensible reasons. (I eliminated obvious groups of spam comments from the counts—and no, I don't consider teens dissing one another to be spam). The top 20% have five or more comments during the three-month period.
- **Comments per post**: You already know the median (zero). The mean is 0.3, with only 45 blogs exceeding that modest figure. I listed 41 blogs (16%) averaging at least half a comment

per post; fourteen averaged at least one comment per post.

- **Illustrations:** Average 18.6 during the quarter, median 5.0; top 20% start at 24 illustrations.
- **Illustrations per post:** Average 0.7 per post, median 0.5 per post. Too many blogs have essentially 1.0 illustrations per post (book review blogs, etc.) to use a boundary at the 20% mark, but I list the 44 blogs (17%) with at least 1.1 illustrations per blog.
- **Total length:** The whole set of blogs totaled just over a million words for the three-month period. The average blog had 4,120 words, but the median was 1,968 words. The outliers in this case are slightly more than 20%; I used 5,000 words as a reasonable cutoff.
- **Average length per post:** The “average average” was 187.3 words—roughly two typical paragraphs. The median was 153.8 words. In this case, I noted two outlying groups—those with longish posts (I used 251 words per post as the cutoff, roughly the top 20%) and those with considerably shorter-than-average posts (I used 89 words per post as the cutoff).
- **Longevity:** I didn’t attempt to calculate a mean or median, and blogs had to be around for at least six months to qualify. I did not remove blogs that had no posts between June 1 and the completion of the study. Summer can be quiet at some libraries. Of the 252 blogs, 155 began during 2006 and another 38 began in the last half of 2005. I list the other 59, the 23% that had been around at least two years by the time of the study.

The mythical “average public library blog,” then, began in early 2006 and had 24 posts with five comments, 19 illustrations and a total of around 4,000 words or around 180 words per post.

## Miscellaneous Notes

A few of you may recognize that the text above is almost entirely taken from a series of *Walt at random* posts. As I started to put this together, I realized that those posts said what needed to be said and that adding more would be overkill.

If you’re wondering about the cover picture (another wraparound, with the back free of typography), it’s of the Library at Ephesus. My wife took the photo. I cropped it. Color shifts and focus...well, that seems to depend on where you buy it

The original manuscript had a list of “particularly intriguing blogs.” I removed it from the book because the list was both too long and too short, and what I find intriguing isn’t necessarily what works best or

what you should look for. I published that list in a *Walt at random* post; you can find it if you’re really interested, but I wouldn’t bother.

While the primary audiences for this book should be public libraries and library schools, some academic, special and school librarians may also find it worthwhile. I’m working on a similar project for academic library blogs, although I can’t say when (or whether) it will appear. The first cut on that project yields 211 blogs from 169 academic libraries (at a slightly smaller number of institutions), although one of the 211 blogs has apparently vanished since I gathered the group.

## A Publish-on-Demand Update: Lulu and CreateSpace/Amazon

When I introduced *Balanced Libraries* in the April 2007 *Cites & Insights*, I also wrote informal notes on the “Lulu experience.” As I noted at the time, the notes weren’t finished. I hadn’t completed the publishing process for that book when I wrote the notes, much less seen how Lulu performed over the long haul. As I said then,

The best I can do is comment on how it’s gone so far, and add *Walt at random* posts or a followup after the book’s been out for a while (or as I publish the second one, assuming that happens).

Since both of those conditions have been met—the book’s been out more than five months and I’ve published “the second one”—these are followup notes. There’s a complication, namely CreateSpace, a more-or-less direct competitor for aspects of Lulu’s services—and, like Lulu, one that requires neither any startup fees nor an exclusive contract.

### *Completing the First Book*

It takes Lulu a few days to produce an order, including the proof order for a new book. If you’re confident that the cover and body will come out OK, you can activate a Lulu book without getting a proof. I waited for a proof copy.

**It was beautiful.** The cover came out better than expected, the interior looked great, the binding was good, it was properly trimmed. I think I needed 15 minutes to inspect the proof copy before going online and opening it up for sale.

### *Since Then*

Lulu does exactly it says it will do, with no unpleasant surprises. With one exception, the reports I’ve had from readers are that the books are properly produced and arrive as quickly as promised. Net proceeds for books sold in one calendar month have been posted

to PayPal right around the 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> of the following month, which is within Lulu's promised date range. The bookstore took no time to set up and customize.

When I was ready to publish *Public Library Blogs*, I found the book wizard significantly improved, making it easier to step through the process. After my experience with the first book, I *almost* decided to put the second one on sale without waiting for a proof copy—but because the cover used deeper colors, chose not to be quite that brave. The cover on the second book came out great as well.

The second book was added to my bookstore (Cites & Insights Books, [lulu.com/waltcrawford](http://lulu.com/waltcrawford)) automatically and in a logical manner, immediately below the first one. I'd guess I could customize the store even more if I chose to—Lulu seems to offer a lot of flexibility.

While my primary account page just shows overall sales for the past week and past month (and total sales), a breakdown of current-month sales by title is just one click away, and full details on sales of each title are nearby.

I'm a little confused as to whether book covers show up next to the books at my Lulu storefront—sometimes they do (I think), sometimes they don't. They *do* show up on the detailed description page for each title and in search results. You can also preview several pages of each book (my choice of pages).

### CreateSpace

This summer, I heard about CreateSpace.com—or, rather, about changes in CreateSpace, part of Amazon. CreateSpace began as a publish-on-demand operation for CDs and DVDs with setup charges. This summer, it added books and dropped the setup charges.

The advantages of CreateSpace over Lulu are two-fold and related:

- You get an ISBN with no setup charge. Until recently, getting an ISBN for a Lulu book would cost *at least* \$95, although that's been reduced to \$50.
- Your publication shows up on Amazon (unless you don't want it to). With Lulu, *if* you add an ISBN and sign up for their distribution program, your publication *might* show up on Amazon—and, conceivably, at other online bookstores or even physical bookstores that use Ingram as a distributor.

Disadvantages? Several even without looking at the two carefully—although one turns out to be a difference, not necessarily a disadvantage.

- CreateSpace offers fewer choices of paperback size and *no* hardbound options. CreateSpace

doesn't currently offer an ebook option. You can't publish a color-interior book longer than 100 pages through CreateSpace—and you don't have the option of saddlestitched (stapled) shorter items.

- For all but relatively short books, CreateSpace takes a slightly bigger share of revenue than Lulu does. (The fixed portion of production costs is slightly lower for CreateSpace—but CreateSpace takes 20% of the *full* retail price, where Lulu takes 20% of the *difference* between production cost and price.)
- Copies sold through Amazon yield *significantly* less revenue (Amazon takes 30% of the retail price)—but a lot *more* revenue than Amazon sales for a Lulu book (because Ingram only pays Lulu 50% of the retail price, and the full production cost comes out of that half).
- You *must* purchase a proof copy for a CreateSpace project before it goes on sale.
- CreateSpace uses bright white paper rather than cream bookstock—but, unlike Amazon/Ingram copies of Lulu books (which are on 50lb. bright white paper, a lighter-weight stock), it's 60lb. paper, the same weight as Lulu. This is a difference, not necessarily a disadvantage: I'm still torn as to which I prefer. The book paper seems more pleasant and traditional; the bright white paper may be easier to read.

I decided to try both, at least for these two books.

### Differences

As I went through the process for the CreateSpace/Amazon versions and as I saw the results, I saw some other significant differences:

- In both cases, the CreateSpace proof cover was inferior in print quality to the Lulu cover, although both were still acceptable.
- You *must* have PDF for both the interior and a wraparound cover (a 12x18" PDF with the cover centered in the overall PDF). Lulu can accept .DOC and .RTF formatted books (and offers templates for various sizes) and can accept front and back covers in various graphic formats if you're not doing a wraparound cover.
- Lulu is much more helpful in the process, with considerably more detail for those unfamiliar with book design, what seems like a friendlier process and a marketplace for those who need more help in design or whatever.
- You can't have an estore on CreateSpace combining several products. The CreateSpace estore is equivalent to the detailed title page on Lulu. Thus, there is no Cites & Insights Books

page on CreateSpace—there are two “estores,” one for each title. (So far, no searches on CreateSpace seem to find my books—but they’re eminently findable in Amazon.)

- CreateSpace/Amazon pay royalties via direct deposit to a bank account (or, for a fee, by check), where Lulu normally pays via PayPal. Lulu says it pays for a month somewhere near the end of the next month (in my case, “just after halfway through” so far). CreateSpace says “at the end of the next month.”
- Both services produce handsome books (if you’ve designed a handsome book to begin with), fully comparable to the best trade paperbacks I’ve seen. Both services assume that you can design your own book, although Lulu will offer a little more help. Both services assume you’re going to do all the publicity—and both will sell you at-cost copies if you want to resell them on your own. Neither one prints a price on the cover, although you could always put one there yourself.

Both are way too expensive if you anticipate selling hundreds of copies, if you can afford the upfront costs of shortrun publishing, if you’re willing to do your own fulfillment and if your tax status is such that keeping an inventory is OK.

If you’re in the middle, “which one?” is a tricky question. Turns out even the paper stock isn’t always clearcut: Lulu uses 60lb. cream stock for 6x9" (trade) and 7.5"-square paperbacks, but uses bright white 60lb. stock for most other paperback sizes (50lb. white for 4.25x6.875" “mass-market” pocketbooks)—or, for some bindings, the same 80lb. color paper used for full-color books. It appears that CreateSpace/Amazon produces books more rapidly, but I’m not sure whether overall fulfillment time is better.

Oh, by the way, if you want to do a straight photo book, there are quite a few options—and Lulu offers an even easier way to publish through their service, at the same \$4.53 plus \$0.15 per page price. You don’t need to design a book or convert anything to PDF; you can do the same “upload one picture at a time” process as with other services and choose a range of templates to produce the book. I don’t know how the prices compare to services that are primarily photo-oriented; I do know Lulu does what it says it will do and produces high-quality books.

### *Success or Failure?*

That’s not a question of what company I used. It’s a question of response within the library field and the current answer is the same as in April: “Too soon to say.”

Here are my targets for *Balanced Libraries*:

- If it sold fewer than 100 copies in the first six months, I’d consider it a failure.
- If it sold more than 300 copies in the first year, I’d consider it a modest success.
- If it sold more than 500 copies in the first two years, I’d consider it a general success.

The book passed the “failure” milestone in early July. At the rate it’s currently selling, it may not reach the second milestone—but that could change.

I believe *Public Library Blogs: 252 Examples* should directly benefit libraries. I would hope for better numbers than those above. But for now, I’m not going to set “failure” and “success” numbers.

Obviously, the process works well enough that I decided to do a second (and probably third) book. Also obviously, this is no way to make a living—nor was it intended to be.

## Bibs & Blather

# Incidents and Sideshows

Some issues of *C&I* have deliberate themes, usually because they consist of one or two massive related essays (e.g. the all-time blockbuster, *Library 2.0* and “*Library 2.0*” [*C&I* 6:2]).

Once in a while, a theme sneaks up on me—for example, the August 2007 issue with its four “On” PERSPECTIVES. That appears to be the case this time around, with the unexpected theme being incidents and sideshows (setting aside the first essay).

**Incident:** The Copyright essay. It’s a prime example of two wrongs not making a right, of a professional association stomping on some people’s rights in its attempt to protect other people’s rights. It’s also an interesting example of how different people see the same set of facts (or “facts,” since there’s some disagreement on the reality of the situation).

**Sideshow:** One of the thoughtful advocates for open access suggested that I simply ignore the whole PRISM situation as little more than a sideshow. I couldn’t do that, and the story definitely has legs—but in some ways it is a sideshow, another clumsy attempt by publishers to keep pounding on the same old discredited arguments against open access in full knowledge that too many people will believe those arguments, having not paid attention in the past.

**Sideshows:** The term and bandwagon “*Library 2.0*” becoming a hot item once again—and another case of ALA’s proclivity for Summits involving invited Important People that are supposed to yield Consensus Agendas—and fall flat. The first is, I believe and hope, incidental to the work of the great middle (even

if some advocates assert that no middle ground exists): Those of us who believe that libraries are generally *not* at risk but should nonetheless continue to grow and improve, using new tools and doing new things whenever those make sense within a local context. The second is...well, I'll just note the Information Commons movement and the National Library Agenda itself as two examples of a repeated pattern that sometimes makes me wonder about my loyalty to the organization (not enough to leave...yet).

**Sideshow:** Another installment in the high-def optical disc follies. Maybe the whole HD DVD vs. Blu-ray thing really is a sideshow, of no particular import.

The main tents? Maybe next issue.

## Library Access to Scholarship **PRISM: Enough Rope?**

PRISM: Partnership for Research Integrity in Science & Medicine. What a noble name! How could such a partnership be anything but desirable?

Here's the group's August 23 press release, offered without interstitial commentary:

The formation of a coalition of scholarly societies and publishers was announced today in an effort to safeguard the scientific and medical peer-review process and educate the public about the risks of proposed government interference with the scholarly communication process.

The Partnership for Research Integrity in Science and Medicine is a coalition launched with developmental support from the Professional & Scholarly Publishing Division of the Association of American Publishers (AAP) to alert Congress to the unintended consequences of government interference in scientific and scholarly publishing.

The group has launched a website at <http://www.prismcoalition.org>, where it articulates the PRISM Principles, an affirmation of publishers' contribution to science, research, and peer review, and an expression of support for continued private sector efforts to expand access to scientific information. (<http://www.prismcoalition.org/prism/about.htm>)

"We are enthusiastic about this initiative and the potential of our new website to educate policy makers and citizens about our efforts to increase access to information, to alert them to the very real threat to peer review that ill-considered government interference represents, and to explore the ways in which we can safeguard peer review as a critical component of scientific integrity," said Patricia Schroeder, president and CEO of AAP. "Only by preserving the essential integrity of the peer-review process can we ensure that scientific and medical research remains accurate, authoritative, and free from manipulation and censorship and distinguishable from junk science."

Recently, there have been legislative and regulatory efforts to compel not-for-profit and commercial journals to surrender to the Federal government a large number of published articles that scholarly journals have paid to peer review, publish, promote, archive and distribute. Mrs. Schroeder stressed that government interference in scientific publishing would force journals to give away their intellectual property and weaken the copyright protections that motivate journal publishers to make the enormous investments in content and infrastructure needed to ensure widespread access to journal articles. It would jeopardize the financial viability of the journals that conduct peer review, placing the entire scholarly communication process at risk.

"Peer review has been the global standard for validating scholarly research for more than 400 years and we want to make sure it remains free of unnecessary government interference, agenda-driven research, and bad science," said Dr. Brian Crawford, chairman of the executive council of AAP's Professional & Scholarly Publishing Division. "The free market of scholarly publishing is responsive to the needs of scholars and scientists and balances the interests of all stakeholders."

Critics argue that peer reviewed articles resulting from government funded research should be available at no cost. However, the expenses of peer review, promotion, distribution and archiving of articles are paid for by private sector publishers, and not with tax dollars. Mrs. Schroeder pointed out that these expenses amount to hundreds of millions of dollars each year for non-profit and commercial publishers. "Why would a federal agency want to duplicate such expenses instead of putting the money into more research funding?" she said.

The PRISM website includes factual information and reasoned commentary designed to educate citizens and policy makers, to dispel inaccuracies and counter the rhetorical excesses indulged in by some advocates of open access, who believe that no one should have to pay for information that is peer reviewed at the expense of non-profit and commercial publishers.

Featured on the PRISM website are backgrounders on peer review, dissemination and access, preservation of the scholarly record and new approaches publishers are taking along with discussion about the risks of government intervention to the sustainability of peer review, copyright infringement, the possibility of selective bias in the record of science, federal budget uncertainties and inefficient allocation of government funding that duplicates private sector investments. Importantly, the site has information to assist the public in making their concerns known to Congress.

"We want to share as much scientific and medical information as possible with the entire world. That's why we got into this business in the first place," Mrs. Schroeder said.

Anyone who wishes to sign on to the PRISM Principles may do so on the site.

Going to the PRISM website and searching for other members of this “coalition,” I’m forced to conclude that, at least at present, PRISM is simply another name for AAP/PSP. Peer review *must* be under direct attack, given the number of times it’s mentioned in the press release—and isn’t it good to hear that publishers are in business “to share as much scientific and medical information as possible with the entire world,” when some of us might have mistakenly thought that Elsevier and others had profit as a primary concern.

If you’ve been following open access issues or even the limited coverage here in *Cites & Insights*, you might hark back to AAP’s hiring of PR consultant Eric Dezenhall—at which point a connection becomes almost inevitable.

Since I did PRISM the courtesy of quoting its entire press release, I should do as well for Peter Suber’s same-day commentary to providing a clear picture of what’s happening here. (The first paragraph of the press release is slightly different in Suber’s version than in the version currently on the PRISM website. That version speaks of bringing together “like minded scholarly societies, publishers, researchers and others” in an effort to...then follows as here.)

### Peter Suber’s Response

August 23, 2007 *Open access news* post “Publishers launch an anti-OA lobbying organization”:

#### Comments.

1. Pat Schroeder and Brian Crawford defend peer review when it is not under attack, and they attack public access to publicly-funded research without showing that it would undermine peer review. As they have many times before, they cloak their concern about publisher revenue with concern about the “integrity” of scholarship and peer review. This is straight out of the playbook of the PR consultant Eric Dezenhall, who advised the AAP “to equate traditional publishing models with peer review.”

2. But asserting that traditional toll-access (TA) publishing equates with peer review, or implying that OA will undermine peer review, doesn’t make it so. I’ll have more to say about this in the September issue of SOAN, next week. [PS update, 9/2/07: My SOAN response is now online.] Meantime here are some point-by-point responses to the press release.

3. “Recently, there have been legislative and regulatory efforts to compel not-for-profit and commercial journals to surrender to the Federal government a large number of published articles that scholarly journals have paid to peer review, publish, promote, archive and distribute.” The word

“surrender” here is false and dishonest. Recent legislative and regulatory efforts have encouraged free online access to peer-reviewed manuscripts within 12 months of publication. A few efforts, which have not yet passed, would require this kind of free online access. But every one of these efforts (1) has applied to the final version of the author’s peer-reviewed manuscript, not to the published edition, and (2) has been scrupulous to avoid amending copyright law or interfering with the transfer of copyright. Under these policies, researchers may still hold copyrights to their writings, may still transfer their copyrights to publishers, and publishers may still hold and exercise those copyrights. (The OA policies have not changed existing law that publications by government-employed researchers, as opposed to government-funded researchers, are uncopyrightable.) These policies don’t require publishers to surrender their articles or their copyrights. If authors transfer copyright to publishers, which is still the custom, then publishers remain the exclusive rights holders for the life of copyright. The policies only require that the version on which they may hold copyright coexist with a free online copy of an earlier version, starting 6–12 months after publication.

4. “[OA policies] would jeopardize the financial viability of the journals that conduct peer review, placing the entire scholarly communication process at risk.” As usual, this is unargued. If we look at existing evidence, as opposed to existing fear, then we have to come to the opposite conclusion. Physics is the field with the highest level and longest history of OA archiving, and in physics TA publishers have publicly acknowledged that they’ve seen no cancellations attributable to OA archiving. In fact, two publishers of TA physics journals, the American Physical Society and Institute of Physics have launched their own mirrors of arXiv, the premier OA archive in the field. Yes, it’s possible that the consequences of high-volume OA archiving in other disciplines will differ from the consequences in physics. But why not start with the evidence, or at least acknowledge the evidence, before turning to unargued fear-mongering?

5. “The free market of scholarly publishing is responsive to the needs of scholars and scientists and balances the interests of all stakeholders.” Calling the current system a “free market” is another distortion. (So is the claim that it balances the interests of all stakeholders, but I’ll leave that to one side here.) Most scientific research is funded by taxpayers. Most researcher salaries are paid by taxpayers. Most TA journal subscriptions are paid by taxpayers. And publishers receive both the articles and the referee reports as donations from authors and referees. Publishers don’t actually say that government money and policymaking should keep out of this sector, because that would really undermine their revenue. What they want is government intervention in all these areas except public access to publicly-funded research. What they want is the present arrangement of government subsidies for the work they publish, government subsidies for their own subscription fees, volunteer labor from authors and peer reviewers,



double-payments from taxpayers who want access —and the label “free market” to wrap it all up in.

6. “Why would a federal agency want to duplicate such expenses instead of putting the money into more research funding?” Another distortion. Some publishers are providing OA to some content when it's sufficiently old. But this is a far cry from providing OA to virtually all publicly-funded research within 6–12 months of publication. If the AAP is saying that the voluntary efforts of publishers will approach what the proposed OA policies would mandate, then the duplication argument starts to make sense. But in that case they have to stop arguing that OA to publicly-funded research would kill their revenues, kill their journals, and kill peer review. They can't have it both ways.

7. And what about government spending money on OA archives instead of research? It's true that government OA policies have costs, and at research funding agencies these costs may reduce the overall research budget. But put the costs in perspective. The US spends about \$55 billion of public money every year on unclassified research without the tiny investment needed to make the results available to all who could use, apply, build on, or benefit from them. How tiny? The cost of implementing the NIH's policy is \$2-4 million/year, or about 0.01% of its \$28 billion/year budget. It's a bargain, and the alternative is to undermine our investment by locking away expensive research where few can use it. Studies by John Houghton and Peter Sheehan have shown that diverting a bit from the research budget in order to make all funded research OA hugely amplifies the return on investment: Quoting Houghton and Sheehan: “With the United Kingdom's GERD [Gross Expenditure on Research and Development] at USD 33.7 billion and assuming social returns to R&D of 50%, a 5% increase in access and efficiency [their conservative estimate] would have been worth USD 1.7 billion; and...With the United State's GERD at USD 312.5 billion and assuming social returns to R&D of 50%, a 5% increase in access and efficiency would have been worth USD 16 billion.”

8. “We want to share as much scientific and medical information as possible with the entire world.” This is clearly not true. They want to sell as much as they can and only permit sharing that does not jeopardize sales.

9. “[T]he expenses of peer review, promotion, distribution and archiving of articles are paid for by private sector publishers, and not with tax dollars.” This is almost true. The costs of facilitating peer review by unpaid volunteers are paid by the journals. But (as noted) public subsidies for research, researchers, and subscriptions all benefit journals and help pay these costs. Moreover, the NIH pays \$30 million/year directly to TA journals in the form of page and color charges —about 10 times the amount needed to provide OA to the agency's entire research output. But like the publishers, let's suppose that these subsidies didn't exist. The OA policies are still a good balance of public and private interests. Publishers provide the costs of peer review and taxpayers provide the

costs of research, which are often thousands of times greater than the costs of peer review. Here's how I finished the argument in an article earlier this month:

“But if publishers and taxpayers both make a contribution to the value of peer-reviewed articles arising from publicly-funded research, then the right question is not which side to favor, without compromise, but which compromise to favor. So far I haven't heard a better solution than a period of exclusivity for the publisher followed by free online access for the public. This compromise-by-time is buttressed by a second compromise-by-version: publishers retain control over the published edition for the life of copyright while the public receives OA to the peer-reviewed but unedited author manuscript. Publishers who want to block OA mandates per se, rather than just negotiate the embargo period, are saying that there should be no compromise, that the public should get nothing for its investment, and that publishers should control access to research conducted by others, written up by others, and funded by taxpayers.”

**Update.** I was so busy responding to the press release that I failed to point out that the PRISM home page makes another Dezenhall argument:

“What's at risk: Policies are being proposed that threaten to introduce undue government intervention in science and scholarly publishing, putting at risk the integrity of scientific research by: ...opening the door to scientific censorship in the form of selective additions to or omissions from the scientific record; ...”

(According to Nature, Dezenhall also advised the AAP “to focus on simple messages, such as “Public access equals government censorship””.)

The Orwellian censorship argument doesn't need or deserve an answer. But if you want one, here's how I answered it in SOAN for February 2007:

“[FRPAA, like other OA mandates,] only applies to articles that have already been published in peer-reviewed journals...[I]t's about archiving copies, not manipulating originals. Hence, the possibility of censorship doesn't come up. The originals will be in libraries and independent web sites around the world, wherever the publisher's market reach, distribution system, and preservation backups have managed to place them. If some of the published originals are not in fact copied for OA archiving, or if some copies are removed after deposit, that would be regrettable (and violate the policy). But it would not affect the originals at all. It would not delete them from libraries and independent web sites around the world, shrink the range of their distribution, change their access policies, or reduce their visibility. To use the word “censorship” to describe the incomplete copying of literature already published, distributed, stored, curated, and preserved in independent locations is incoherent newspeak. Or (to play along), if occasional non-archiving really is a kind of censorship, then publishers who want to defeat an OA ar-

chiving mandate like FRPAA want systematic non-archiving and mass censorship.”

Odd as it is to devote the first 2,600 words of a *C&I* essay to quotes from other sources, it seems necessary to frame this situation and discussion. And, of course, Peter Suber thinks about these things much more deeply and knowledgeable than I ever will. (As usual, it's tempting to just say “Go read Suber,” but I know *Open access news* has a lot of copy and some people who read *C&I* aren't going to follow Suber directly.)

Before noting some of the other commentary on PRISM, it really is worth noting something about PRISM's site. As of September 15, 2007, the “Correspondence” section includes *only* items appearing prior to the formation of PRISM—it's as though there's been no correspondence of any sort since then. Similarly “In the news”—everything except the PRISM press release precedes August 23, 2007, although I'm checking this 20 days later after scores of items have appeared. And one item under “Forum” is testament to the fratricidal instincts of some OA leaders, unfortunately but also unsurprisingly. (There's a breathtaking essay on “Myth vs. Fact” elsewhere on the PRISM site—but you can peruse that on your own.)

## The PRISM Principles

Here are the PRISM Principles:

Society benefits from the creative output of researchers, clinicians, academics, scholarly publishers and others engaged in the pursuit of scientific discovery and the distribution of accumulated knowledge.

Scientific knowledge is sharpened and refined by the system of quality control known as peer review—a process that has stood the test of time as the best means by which the public's investment and trust in science are assured through demonstrated academic excellence and scientific integrity.

Scientific knowledge should incorporate new research as part of the scholarly record based on merit alone—not tradition, ideology, or political expediency. Society is best served when the pursuit of scientific knowledge takes place in an environment of intellectual freedom—where objectivity and independence are guaranteed, and where published expression is protected from governmental or other controls, and is free of censorship or bias.

Scientific knowledge must be documented and preserved in perpetuity, free of alteration, political or ideological pressures, or the threat of uncertain funding.

Research funding is best spent on new and important research studies, and should leverage rather than duplicate the valuable publishing infrastructure built over decades by private sector publishers working in partnership with the research community.

Research results should be disseminated as broadly as possible, accomplished in a way that safeguards scientific integrity and the sustainability of investments in peer review, dissemination, archiving, and knowledge preservation. Raw research data should be made freely available to other researchers and those who funded the original research.

Society is best served by sustainable business models and reasonable copyright protections that provide positive incentives for publishers to continue innovating in their distribution of scientific knowledge, investment in peer review, and exploration of preservation technologies.

The free market of scholarly publishing is dynamic and competitive, responsive to the needs of scholars and scientists, and balances the interests of all stakeholders in making research widely available. It encourages publishing innovation and diversity, and should remain free from government mandates that favor particular business models.

It's hard to object to the first three principles. The fourth one is interesting, given that “preserved in perpetuity” has *never* been part of the role of publishers and is far more likely via a combination of OA, projects like LOCKSS and multiple repositories.

The fifth principle would be interesting if it made any sense, but Suber's addressed that one already. The sixth principle is tricky: “the sustainability of investments in...dissemination” is the only real issue here, since neither scientific integrity nor peer review are *at all* under attack and since publishers historically do not handle archiving or knowledge preservation.

What can you say about the last two principles? That we haven't had “reasonable copyright protections” since at least 1976—and that copyright protections are supposed to encourage new creation, not protect publisher profits? That the “free market” of scholarly publishing is no such thing? That “investment in peer review” is mostly nonsense? Go back to Suber's commentary; it covers the Principles pretty well.

What's going on here? Nothing terribly surprising, if a touch disappointing. AAP hired a bulldog PR person whose advice was to keep hammering on simple points even if they were known to be deceptive. AAP created a new “coalition” that appears to be carrying out the bulldog's advice. If you pay good money for advice, you're inclined to take that advice.

Nonsense like this couldn't happen at all except for one unfortunate truism of open access, both within the academy and (I'm afraid) within librarianship. That truism: Most people just don't care. But that's a separate essay...maybe next time around.

## Enough Rope?

So is PRISM just the AAP/PSP Lobby, and will it succeed in preventing effective steps toward OA? Maybe not. Consider a few of the reactions—ignoring most of those who amplified Peter Suber's crisp responses. You might also look up the lyrics for Randy Newman's "Big Hat, No Cattle" (readily available on the web, last time I checked); for some reason, PRISM strongly reminds me of the protagonist of that song.

*August 24, 2007*

Tom Wilson commented at his *Information research weblog*, saying, "The commercial journal publishers are *really* in a state of panic" but feeling that "it isn't going to fool many on this side of the Atlantic." A little more of Wilson's optimistic commentary:

...Free OA, scholarly journals operate the same peer review process as do commercial journals: if they didn't scholars wouldn't publish in them, but free, collaboratively supported journals are growing in number and take away submissions from the commercial journals, which will find it harder and harder to maintain quality. So - in panic - they are lying to you, because, rather like the neo-con supporters that the same lobbyists worked for, the big lie is the only strategy. Perhaps Karl Rove has gone straight from the White House to PRISM?...

What this recent initiative by the publishers points to is that the only sure way for the scholarly communities to take charge of the scholarly communication process is to rid themselves of their commercial exploiters and promote the publication of free, collaboratively produced and subsidised journals. Forget the Green and Gold routes insofar as they depend upon the acquiescence of the business world and go for the Platinum Route - it is the only way to take charge, and you have been exploited long enough.

Perhaps 'PRISM' really means, 'Publishers Resisting Intellectual Solidarity in the Market!'

A few days later, Wilson resigned from the editorial boards of two journals published by supporters of PRISM—including one that he founded.

Mike Simpson (University of Wisconsin-Madison) had interesting "translations" of the fifth and seventh Principles (among others) at a *splash quite unnoticed* ([www.ice-nine.net/~mgsimpson/asqu/](http://www.ice-nine.net/~mgsimpson/asqu/)):

#5: Translation: "Please don't devote any of the incredibly scarce resources that you have left over after you finish paying our protection money to attempt to escape the less-than-zero-sum game that we've constructed for you."

#7: Translation: "Look, our lobbyists are already doing a bang-up job getting us the laws we want, the ones that help us collude with the bought-and-paid-for representatives that you so helpfully democratically elected, to sustain the magnificent cash-flow from you to us that is

the hallmark of any successful business enterprise. Don't muck about with anything different — leave it to us, we'll take care of the innovation in this system, thank you very much."

Bill Hooker at *Open reading frame* ([www.sennoma.net](http://www.sennoma.net)) had another suggestion for the real meaning of PRISM: "Publishers Relying on Insidious Subversion Methods." A bit of his August 24, 2007 post: "This is disgusting. This runs counter to everything that science, academia, scholarship (and scholarly publishing!) stand for."

*August 26 and 27, 2007*

On August 26, the online community manager of *PLoS-ONE* put together a nice compilation of extracts from more than two dozen early commentaries under the title "This PRISM does not turn white light into the beautiful colors of the rainbow" at *A blog around the clock* ([scienceblogs.com/clock/](http://scienceblogs.com/clock/)). It's quite an array. Jonathan Eisen thought "this must be a spoof" but recognizes that's not true: "PRISM is for real. It is the last gasp of a dying breed—publishers who refuse to do what is the right thing for science and society... I think this is a sad day for [AAP]." Peter Murray-Rust is especially disappointed because "a few of the conventional publishers have taken a positive view about the future." Dorothea Salo of *Caveat lector* had a calm, measured response, saying (in part): "I think it's the action of a terrified group of amoral scumbags completely bankrupt of actual insight or innovation and utterly desperate to keep their current unjustifiable profit margins... If I were a scholarly publisher, I would distance myself from this fiasco far, fast, and publicly... and if my rep on the AAP had been involved in any way other than "vigorous opposition," that rep would be fired immediately—not just from representing the publisher to the AAP, but *altogether*. Elsevier, Wiley, ACS, and (it would appear) others have a *lot* of explaining to do." There's lots more.

John Dupuis commented on PRISM in an August 27, 2007 *Confessions of a science librarian* post ([jdupuis.blogspot.com](http://jdupuis.blogspot.com)), starting with this comment: "Oh, this is a sad, pathetic story." Dupuis quotes some of PRISM's material and calls it "the actions of the representatives of an industry that's scared of the future, that can't come to grips with the sea changes happening in the world around us, that can't adjust to how those changes will affect their businesses. And they definitely want what they perceive to be the status quo: big revenues, huge profits and a near monopoly on scholarly publishing." After noting sources of refutation, Dupuis talks about the makeup of AAP/PSP's executive council—the usual suspects (Elsevier, Wiley,

Kluwer, McGraw-Hill, Springer, Thomson)—but also IEEE, ACS, MIT Press and others. He offers some specific advice for librarians:

So, what can we librarians do to make ourselves heard? First of all, I'm not going to waste much breath on trying to persuade the Elsevier's of the world to get on board. They'll be the last to convert. What I think is the best plan is to work on the societies.

\* If you're on a library advisory group for a society, use that forum to explain the benefits of OA to society members and to explore with the society the kinds of business models that can work

\* At conferences, talk to the society reps and explain your displeasure with PRISM and how you think they're playing the game of the commercials

\* Advocate with your faculty, explain the controversy to them and get them to advocate for OA with their societies

\* Money talks. If at all possible, don't subscribe to journals just because they are from societies, even if they don't make sense

Within a couple of days of the PRISM news release, at least one AAP/PSP member had opted out. Mike Rossner of Rockefeller University Press sent an open letter to AAP that begins:

I am writing to request that a disclaimer be placed on the PRISM website (<http://www.pris Coalition.org/>) indicating that the views presented on the site do not necessarily reflect those of all members of the AAP. We at the Rockefeller University Press strongly disagree with the spin that has been placed on the issue of open access by PRISM.

So far, I've been unable to find any such disclaimer on the PRISM site. That means the so-called coalition is explicitly failing to pay attention to *its own members*.

### **PISD**

Then there's the Partnership for Integrity in Scientific Dissemination (or Dis-semination on the site, [pisdcoalition.org](http://pisdcoalition.org)). It is a rather charming spoof site, "established by a concerned group of biomedical scientists to combat the steady encroachment of Open Access (OA) publishing initiatives on the profit margins of traditional publishers." Here's PISD's take: "The PISD Coalition maintains that OA is *not* in the best interest of science. After undergoing extensive mediation and couples counseling, the PISD Coalition can confidently assert that scientific information does not *want* to be free. It wants to stay just where it is: safe and warm in the Reed Elsevier vaults, protected by the long arm of intellectual property law, earning massive profits for traditional publishers."

The site has one page—an FAQ—which, if read with care, is a fairly strong commentary on PRISM. One of the most interesting responds to these ques-

tions: "Why disparage OA? Isn't there evidence that Open Access is good for science?" The response:

Proponents of OA like to point out that most empirical studies assessing the impact of OA on scientific dissemination have found a favorable effect of OA over conventional, closed-access models. There's no question that it sounds convincing when a library scientist claims that papers that are freely available online are cited significantly more often than papers that aren't—sometimes twice as often! But there are at least two problems with such 'data' that OA advocates won't tell you about.

First, all of the studies on OA have a common problem: they make assumptions. It's important to realize that assumptions can be wrong. For example, most of the data favoring OA are based on long-term projections. OA advocates might say things like "if self-archiving online continues to increase at the current rate, 95% of scientific articles will be freely downloadable by 2021, increasing total citations by 350%." Ninety-five and three-hundred-and-fifty may sound like fancy numbers, but the reality is that to achieve the projections OA advocates make, a lot of assumptions about the future have to hold. The problem is that not only do we not know that these assumptions will hold true, we don't even know what other factors might come into play that OA advocates haven't thought to include in their models! To paraphrase a famous man, there are known unknowns—things we know that we don't know—and unknown unknowns—things we don't know we don't know. Contrast that with what we do know for sure—namely, that if OA gains substantial support from the scientific community, commercial publishers will lose hundreds of millions of dollars. Isn't it silly to give up hundreds of millions of dollars in return for a basketful of unknowns?

Second, many of the studies on OA have been conducted by scientists. It's hardly surprising that studies conducted by scientists tend to favor positions that scientists incorrectly believe to be in their best interests! To obtain a balanced viewpoint, you would have to have an equal number of studies conducted by impartial groups that have extensively consulted publishers to obtain their side of the story. Unfortunately, there aren't very many published studies that favor a conventional publishing model over OA. That shouldn't be surprising either considering who the editors of scientific journals are: they're scientists! Isn't it ironic that scientists are conspiring to eliminate the very same publishing industry that stacks the deck in scientists' favor, and against itself?

And in response to "Don't subscription costs present a problem for researchers and institutions that may not be able to afford access?":

We don't think so. By way of analogy, consider the debate over medical care. Everyone agrees that the high cost of medical services in the United States renders health care prohibitively expensive for a small but lazy segment of the population that refuses to work hard enough to make a better wage. But you don't see anyone

arguing that America should throw out privatized health care just because some people are lazy! Similarly, we don't think the fact that some researchers work at small universities that can't afford subscriptions to many journals is a disincentive for those researchers. If anything, it's an incentive to publish more articles and get hired by a richer institution. Thus, subscription costs provide a direct benefit to the scientific enterprise by providing a kind of quality control on scientific personnel. While we don't know exactly how important this influence is in the grand scheme of things, cursory estimates provided to us by a consulting firm suggest it's very large.

### *A Few More Reactions and Actions*

I could quote dozens, maybe scores of reactions—nearly all derisive. There was a brief brouhaha because PRISM used images licensed from Getty and initially displayed the “non-cleared” versions (with visible Getty watermarks), but that was little more than a sideshow. (Yes, pointing out copyright infringement by a group devoted to tight copyright is ironic—but still it's a sideshow.)

Andrew Leonard of *Salon* wrote “Science publishers get even stupider” on August 28, 2007. Leonard harks back to Dezenhall:

Despite my rhetoric, I can't say I actually believed that the publishers would *take Dezenhall's advice*. But that is exactly what has happened... I stand by my original opinion. [AAP] and everyone associated with it should be ashamed of trying to protect their profit margins by slandering the open access movement as government intervention and censorship. Research paid for with government funds should be freely accessible to the general public. Peer review will survive. PRISM, however, will be doomed by its own weasel words, which represent a betrayal of everything science stands for.

I find it hard to believe Leonard is that naïve. AAP paid Dezenhall serious money for advice. It must have known what kind of advice it was paying for. Why should anyone be surprised when AAP *took* the advice?

Two striking reactions appeared on September 4, 2007. Dorothea Salo posted “Next time? Think.” at *Caveat lector*, noting that she talked to a roomful of publishers in December 2006—and warned them about the likely payback for underhanded tactics. Portions of her post, **which you really should read in the original**:

These were not junior editors or wet-behind-the-ears interns. These were the wheelers and dealers, the top brass, the VIPs...

A lot of my audience represented folks whose publishers are nominally (key word, that) part of the PRISM initiative. Maybe, as has been suggested, they didn't know their employers were pulling this stunt. Me, I'm dubious; it's the little guys who are protesting and backed-

aling right now. But if they were at my talk, there is no excuse for saying they didn't know PRISM would blow up in their face.

Because I *told them*.

I told them about the American Anthropological Association, which was in the middle of a messy crack-up over open access... Don't shoot yourself in the foot, I said; lay your cards on the table and discuss, don't be arrogant, because AAA has weakened itself with this and you'd be shocked at how easy it is for you to do the same.

Huh. Ain't *that* starting to sound familiar.

When the Dezenhall thing broke, I told 'em again. Get away from this, I said, *far* away. I didn't say “it will win you no friends and make you plenty of enemies” because honestly, I thought that was *obvious*.

Guess not.

Look, here's one last free clue, big-pig publishers. We in the open-access movement are, by and large, *pit bulls*. We are mean. We are scrappers. We are stubborn as mules; we have to be to stick it in this business. We bite as well as bark. Most dangerously of all, we are idealists, and despite a couple of embarrassing exceptions, we keep our noses clean... And most of us, unlike you, *have very little to lose*...

You are not in a good place to be messing with us, okay? We won't always win, but we always fight—and we don't have to win every time to erode your position and bolster ours. When you make it this easy for us—not to mention fracturing your own base, you idiots, how could you think that would not happen?—you lose. Big. I'd rather fight an honorable opponent. Truly. Next time? Think.

I wrote the draft of this PERSPECTIVE on September 5, 2007. Since then, here's some of what's happened:

- The Oxford University Press has distanced itself from PRISM.
- Rockefeller University Press is seeing the connections and has also withdrawn its support of the DC Principles coalition.
- The Copyright Alliance, a Big Media group pushing extreme copyright, issued a misleading press release arguing against the NIH archiving provision.
- Brian Crawford ingenuously said “We did not expect to have encountered the sort of criticism we have seen thus far” and claimed that PRISM was “a way to have a very productive dialogue.”
- James D. Jordan, president and director of Columbia University Press, resigned from the AAP/PSP Executive Council after vocally opposing the PRISM launch.
- Stephen Bourne, CEO of Cambridge University Press, made it clear that Cambridge “has in no way been involved in, or consulted on, the

Prism initiative” and called the PRISM message “oversimplistic and ill-judged.”

There are two long pieces you **must** read in the original. I can’t do justice to either one in a summary. Those two pieces will conclude this sad story as well as anything. PRISM is a stunt—an underhanded stunt that may have been predictable. I believe it’s a stunt that will backfire badly. I *hope* it will have the effect of alerting scholars and librarians to the sheer deviousness of some (certainly not all) scholarly publishers and to the need for reform within the scholarly communication system. Open access may not be all of that reform, but it’s a significant part of it.

That said, **go read** “Watch your language” by Alma Swan, posted September 4, 2007 at *Optimal-Scholarship* ([optimalscholarship.blogspot.com](http://optimalscholarship.blogspot.com)), an impassioned commentary by one who finds herself “very sad and, secondarily, disappointed.” After that, **read** Issue 113 of the *SPARC Open Access Newsletter* ([www.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/newsletter/09-02-07.htm](http://www.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/newsletter/09-02-07.htm)). The prime essay, “Will open access undermine peer review,” runs 12 single-spaced pages and offers well-documented, detailed discussion of the strawman that PRISM and other anti-OA forces keep raising again and again and again.

### ©3: Balancing Rights

## SFWA Takedowns: A Copyright Incident

This real-life parable is an incident—not a main event, but worth considering as an example of how badly things can go awry. It involves a group I admire: the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America (SFWA). It also involves Scribd, a text-sharing site I’d never seen before hearing about this incident.

You may not have heard about this particular side-show. On the other hand, you may have: A key actor is Cory Doctorow, a science fiction writer who’s also heavily involved with the Electronic Frontier Foundation—and who blogs at *Boing Boing*. Thanks largely to Doctorow’s involvement and some truly hamhanded efforts by SFWA, this story made it to *Boing Boing*, *Ars Technica*, *I*, and “the rounds.”

### The Setup

John Scalzi’s summary of the events leading up to the “fairly significant dust-up online,” from “About that latest SFWA thing” (September 3, 2007, *Whatever* [[www.scalzi.com/whatever/](http://www.scalzi.com/whatever/)]):

In August, the Vice President of SFWA, acting for author Robert Silverberg and the estate of Isaac Asimov, presented Scribd with a list of files on that site that infringed on the copyrights of those authors and asked Scribd to remove those files, per the Digital Millennium Copyright Act. Scribd complied, although, as it turns out and for various reasons, the request did not conform to the requirements of the DMCA.

Unfortunately, the list provided to Scribd by the SFWA VP was not vetted to any great degree and contained quite a few titles on it that weren’t by Asimov or Silverberg (and thus, which SFWA had no right to ask to have taken down), including *Down and Out in the Magic Kingdom*, by Cory Doctorow. Cory, as you may or may not know, rather famously open sources all his fiction and lets anyone distribute and share it on a non-commercial basis. He’s also expressly forbidden SFWA from representing him in matters of copyright.

As with most uploadable-content sites, Scribd (which has just under 188,000 documents as of this writing) does not make any attempt to enforce copyright up front—but explicitly says it supports copyright and, in fact, details requirements for a DMCA takedown notice. It appears that Scribd members can also flag documents as inappropriate, with copyright status being one reason.

When I checked on September 13, I saw a fair number of documents with “Isaac Asimov” or “Robert Silverberg” in the document. Some (by no means all) either were stories by one of them or *included* part or all of such stories. In the latter case, you can’t be sure the document isn’t fair use.

A different accounting of this affair by another science fiction writer (Jerry Pournelle) states things differently in the interest of drawing different conclusions, but I believe we can stipulate a few facts:

- Some material on Scribd infringed copyrights held by authors who have authorized SFWA to act on their behalf.
- David Burt, an SFWA VP, sent a list of files to Scribd and asked for DMCA-required takedowns. The list and accompanying material may not have met DMCA requirements.
- As a safe harbor (where DMCA comes into play), Scribd is *obliged* to take down such material on receipt of a properly-executed takedown request.
- Some of the files on that list *should not have been*—either they did not represent infringement or they represented the work of authors who did not authorize SFWA action.

What’s the big deal? Consider this text at Scribd:

It is our policy to respond to clear notices of alleged copyright infringement that comply with the Digital Millennium Copyright Act. In addition, we will promptly

terminate without notice the accounts of those determined by us to be "repeat infringers". If you are a copyright owner or an agent thereof, and you believe that any content hosted on our web site ([www.scribd.com](http://www.scribd.com)) infringes your copyrights, then you may submit a notification pursuant to the Digital Millennium Copyright Act ("DMCA") by providing Scribd's Designated Copyright Agent with the following information in writing (please consult your legal counsel or see 17 U.S.C. Section 512(c)(3) to confirm these requirements):

1. A physical or electronic signature of a person authorized to act on behalf of the owner of an exclusive right that is allegedly infringed.
2. Identification of the copyrighted work claimed to have been infringed, or, if multiple copyrighted works on the Scribd web site are covered by a single notification, a representative list of such works at that site.
3. Identification of the material that is claimed to be infringing or to be the subject of infringing activity and that is to be removed or access to which is to be disabled, and information reasonably sufficient to permit Scribd to locate the material. **Providing URLs in the body of an email is the best way to help us locate content quickly.**
4. Information reasonably sufficient to permit Scribd to contact the complaining party, such as an address, telephone number, and, if available, an electronic mail address at which the complaining party may be contacted.
5. A statement that the complaining party has a good faith belief that use of the material in the manner complained of is not authorized by the copyright owner, its agent, or the law.
6. A statement that the information in the notification is accurate, and under penalty of perjury, that the complaining party is authorized to act on behalf of the owner of an exclusive right that is allegedly infringed.

**Please note that under Section 512(f) of the DMCA, any person who knowingly materially misrepresents that material or activity is infringing may be subject to liability.**

There are two issues here. First, sending a DMCA takedown notice accuses someone else of infringing copyright. In Scribd's case, it can also lead to the uploader being banned from Scribd. Second, sending a *false* takedown notice—one that says to take down noninfringing material or material that the complainant isn't authorized to act on—is perjury and, under DMCA, more. Here's Section 512(f):

Any person who knowingly materially misrepresents under this section—

- (1) that material or activity is infringing, or
- (2) that material or activity was removed or disabled by mistake or misidentification,

shall be liable for any damages, including costs and attorneys' fees, incurred by the alleged infringer, by any copyright owner or copyright owner's authorized licensee, or by a service provider, who is injured by such misrepresentation, as the result of the service provider relying upon such misrepresentation in removing or disabling access to the material or activity claimed to be infringing, or in replacing the removed material or ceasing to disable access to it.

That second subclause is interesting: Wrongly stating that something was taken down erroneously is *itself* enough to make you liable for damages. The lessons: Use DMCA takedown notices carefully—and complain about them just as carefully.

## The Brouhaha

SFWA's official screwed up. Maybe trivially, maybe non-trivially (depending on whether it's your ox being gored, er, material being removed erroneously)—and maybe that doesn't matter. The action caused some of Doctorow's stuff to get taken down: That was a serious mistake. I'm not sure how you accidentally confuse a Doctorow novel with something by Asimov or Silverberg—neither of whom, as far as I know, has set novels in the Magic Kingdom—but never mind. (Turns out it was because the legally-posted document included a blurb from a review in *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine*, thus including that name.)

Cory Doctorow was not a happy camper. Here's part of his lengthy August 30, 2007 post (which deserves reading in full) at *Boing Boing* ([www.boingboing.net](http://www.boingboing.net)):

The Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America has used the Digital Millennium Copyright Act to fraudulently remove numerous non-infringing works from Scribd...

Included in the takedown were: a junior high teacher's bibliography of works that will excite children about reading sf, the back-catalog of a magazine called *Ray Gun Revival*, books by other authors who have never authorized SFWA to act on their behalf, such as Bruce Sterling, and my own Creative Commons-licensed novel, "Down and Out in the Magic Kingdom."...

It appears that the list was compiled by searching out every single file that contained the word "Asimov" or "Silverberg" and assuming that these files necessarily infringed on Silverberg and Asimov's copyrights...

...Many of the works that were listed in the takedown were written by the people who'd posted them to Scribd—these people have been maligned and harmed by SFWA, who have accused them of being copyright violators and have caused their material to be taken offline. These people made the mistake of talking about and promoting science fiction—by compiling a bibliography of good works to turn kids onto science fiction,

by writing critical or personal essays that quoted science fiction novels, or by discussing science fiction...

Ironically, by sending a DMCA notice to Scribd, SFWA has perjured itself by swearing that every work on that list infringed a copyright that it represented.

Since this is not the case, SFWA has exposed itself to tremendous legal liability. The DMCA grants copyright holders the power to demand the removal of works without showing any evidence that these works infringe copyright, a right that can amount to de facto censorship when exercised without due care or with malice. The courts have begun to recognize this, and there's a burgeoning body of precedent for large judgements against careless, malicious or fraudulent DMCA notices—for example, Diebold was ordered to pay 125,000 for abusing the DMCA takedown process...

In addition to the legal risks, SFWA's actions have exposed it and its members to professional risk. For example, the page that used to host my book, *Down and Out in the Magic Kingdom* now reads, "The document 'Down and Out in the Magic Kingdom' has been removed from Scribd. This content has been removed at the request of copyright agent Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America." *Down and Out in the Magic Kingdom* was the first novel released under a Creative Commons license, and I've spent the past four years exhorting fans to copy my work and share it. Now I've started to hear from readers who've seen this notice and concluded that I am a hypocrite who uses SFWA to send out legal threats to people who heeded my exhortation...

There's no excuse for this. Even a naive Internet user should be able to understand that if you compile a list of every file online that has the word "Asimov" in it, you'll get a lot of works that weren't written by Isaac Asimov included in the search results. In the case of *Down and Out in the Magic Kingdom*, the file included a blurb from Gardner Dozois, former longtime editor of *Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine* -- and it was that "Asimov" in "Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine" that triggered the takedown...

I'm a dues-paying SFWA member and past volunteer who relies on the free distribution of my books to sell printed books and earn my living. By fraudulently removing my works from Scribd, SFWA is taking money out of my pocket--it's the online equivalent of sending fake legal threats to bookstores demanding that they take my books off their shelves.

There's more, including an apology (of sorts) from SFWA's president referring to "more than three" erroneous inclusions.

### *John Scalzi's view*

Scalzi's post includes considerably more than the summary that begins this essay. The post is four print pages long, not including 92 comments at this writing. Scalzi is not only an SFWA member (you must be

a published author to join), he ran for president earlier this year. His take on it is **well worth reading in full**. Excerpts from his five major points—and his concluding paragraph:

1. Look, SFWA screwed this up, and there's no sugar-coating it. SFWA was absolutely in the right to ask Scribd to take down infringing works of the two authors it represented, and I think that needs to be acknowledged up front; Scribd had no right to have that work on its site. Where SFWA screwed up was in not making its "DMCA notices" conform to the law, and in providing Scribd with a takedown list rife with errors, which caused works to come down that shouldn't have come down.

This was sloppy and unprofessional work, which positioned SFWA to be pilloried for abusing other people's intellectual property rights, even as it was—quite correctly—moving to protect the IP rights of Asimov and Silverberg. And pilloried it indeed was, because it had monumentally ironic misfortune of violating the IP rights of Cory Doctorow...Defending the rights of some authors does not excuse violating the rights of others.

2. That said, SFWA and in particular its president Michael Capobianco did the right thing by apologizing quickly, and by promising not to have such an event repeat...

3. Apropos to this, there have been a number of comments online...along the lines of "This never would have happened if Scalzi were president of SFWA." Well, no, it wouldn't have, not in the least because I wouldn't have allowed the individual most personally responsible for the event to have been in a position to have caused it.

That said, let's be very clear that I think one of SFWA's responsibilities is to help its members control their work, online and off. SFWA is not wrong for wanting to have work that infringes its members rights taken down from Scribd... SFWA erred in implementation, but not in intent.

4. Scribd, the site which has the offending files in question, has used this event as a way to position itself as a victim of SFWA's heavy-handedness, but, you know. There are a whole bunch of copyright violations up on the site, and while Scribd is beating its breast about how they always work with authors to take down infringing work, even without a full DMCA request, I can speak from personal experience that they have not always been so delightfully responsive...

5. If I might make a personal appeal here, it would be not to judge all of SFWA according to the ham-handed actions of our current vice-president in this particular event... SFWA's not monolithic...

In the end, this is actually pretty simple. SFWA did a stupid thing, it apologized as soon as it realized it did a stupid thing, and now, in its own delightful way, is trying to figure what the hell it's going to do next. The good news is that it's not likely to do the same stupid thing again. That's a step in the right direction.



The comments—many from science fiction authors, many others not—are interesting. As seems always to be the case here, more than one commenter argued that two wrongs *do* make a right: That it was OK for SFWA to infringe on Doctorow's rights and accuse innocent people of being copyright infringers *because* some of the items on the list *should* have been taken down.

Jerry Pournelle (or “Dr. Pournelle,” since he's one of those who always refers to PhDs as “Dr. whoever” and does have that degree) had his own lengthy take on the matter in a September 4, 2007 post at *Chaos manor reviews* with the scintillating title “Computing at Chaos Manor: September 4, 2007.” As one might expect from Pournelle, the heading includes both “Jerry Pournelle” as a signature and, after a website link, “Copyright 2007 Jerry E. Pournelle, Ph.D.” His post runs *nine* single-spaced pages (no comments—they appear not to be allowed). Given Pournelle's attitudes on copyright, I'm only including *very* brief excerpts; you can find the whole at [www.chaosmanor-reviews.com](http://www.chaosmanor-reviews.com). Pournelle's take on Cory Doctorow's account and a slightly snarky but factual account at *ars technica*:

If one reads those versions and nothing else, the case is very clear. SFWA in a bumbling attempt to bully a legitimate web site threatened use of the Digital Millennium Copyright Act, and was properly smacked down by the Electronic Frontier Foundation to the cheers of all those who are hip to the ways of Web 2.0.

Pournelle talks about SFWA's practices to protect copyright, how much he disliked seeing his stuff at Scribd, how bad the problem was, what “Dr. Burt” did about it (that “Dr.” gets used a *lot*)—and by inference how trivial the problem was: “There were thousands of copyright documents... At least three of the documents named on [Burt's] list should not have been on the list... there may have been more, as many perhaps as ten; this in list of hundreds of documents which scribd had absolutely no right to post.” Thousands, three, “as many as ten,” hundreds...quite a numbers game (particularly since the number of inappropriate inclusions appears to be *at least* 80, well beyond “as many as ten” and a fair percentage of “hundreds”).

Pournelle summarizes the “explosion” of commentary: “SFWA was trampling on the rights of those who believe in Creative Commons. SFWA was infringing on copyright! SFWA was misrepresenting itself. SFWA was the bad guy. Forgotten in all this were the rights of the authors who had created the stories being posted on scribd.” In the first two cases the criticism is right: SFWA was “trampling on the rights” of those who use CC licenses—which infringes

their copyrights as “the authors who had created the stories.” Apparently some authors' rights are more equal than others. Apparently the language within SFWA's closed conferences got “obscene.”

Pournelle notes EFF's letter to SFWA and says “one would have thought that if EFF were going to get in this act, it would have been on behalf of the authors!” Pournelle says SFWA disbanded the Electronic Piracy Committee and “will no longer act on behalf of writers in these matters.” Here's the actual motion passed by the SFWA Board (quoted from the SFWA president's LiveJournal):

Motion: That, effective immediately, all of the activities of the current ePiracy Committee be suspended and the Committee itself be disbanded until such time as the Board has had the opportunity to review the legal ramifications of sending out any additional DMCA notices, as well as to explore other methods by which SFWA may be able to assist authors in defending their individual rights, while ensuring that any such activity will not unduly expose SFWA to negative legal ramifications.

Further, that the Board shall issue a call for a temporary, exploratory committee of between five and nine individuals to investigate the views of the membership on issues of copyright, authors rights, what role the membership would like to see SFWA take on these matters and what level is risk (legal, public relations or otherwise) is acceptable to the membership in regards to that role, and what—if any—public policy statement SFWA might issue on these subjects on behalf of its membership.

Finally, that the Board, in conjunction with the findings of the above committee and its own deliberations, will work to develop a new, permanent committee with a clear matrix of operations and goals, whose purposes shall include, but not necessarily be limited to protecting the copyrights of our member authors who desire such protection in a way that complies with the applicable laws, and to help educate both our membership and the public at large in regards to copyright law.

I find it hard to read that as a decision to abandon action. It sounds to me like a decision to make sure the actions taken are appropriate.

Pournelle admits that Scribd hasn't hurt him—and flat-out denies that SFWA's actions could have caused financial harm to Doctorow or others. He admits that what little evidence there is about electronic “piracy” of books suggests it may *help* actual sales. He agrees DMCA is deeply flawed (and claims the U.S. was *forced* to make copyright life+50 because, you know, the Berne Convention—after all, the U.S. couldn't possibly influence international agreements, could it?). “Moral” comes up more than once in his discussion, as does “pirate.” And he offers this statement in large bold type: “Depriving a laborer of his

wages is, along with stealing from widows and orphans, one of the sins that traditionally cries to Heaven for vengeance.”

Finally, Pournelle says the issue (should authors be able to control their own works?) isn't going away and that he chooses “to stand with those who defend the moral rights of authors to control their own works,” saying he feels “a bit like Horatius at the bridge.”

But Cory Doctorow does not deny the moral rights of authors to control their own works—including *his own* rights in that regard. John Scalzi does not deny the moral rights of authors to control their own works, but he is aware that using the words “Isaac Asimov” within a document does not automatically make that document part of Isaac Asimov's works. (I'm a great admirer of Asimov's style and work; don't read any of this as a putdown.) Yes, there are a few anti-copyright extremists who would deny such rights, but Pournelle is hardly in an embattled minority here.

I left out almost all of what Pournelle actually says—and he make some good points. As Scalzi says (in one of the comments on his own post linking to Pournelle's take), “both Cory and Pournelle see the event through their own filter and report accordingly.” Nor is Scalzi ready to declare Scribd (or anyone else) innocent: “Scribd is a business entity...and enjoined to follow the law. If the site encourages infringement of copyright, then Pournelle is perfectly in his rights to see them as bad guys, because they are messing with his ability to control his work.”

Sidebar to this sidebar: *Naturally* I searched my own name—and of fourteen results, two were my documents instead of ones with “Walt” (Whitman, etc.) somewhere in the text and “Crawford” somewhere else. Both were issues of *Cites & Insights*—one issue 4:5, the Broadcast Flag issue, uploaded based on its relation to EFF issues (I believe it's also been mounted on EFF's site or some affiliated site). The other? *C&I* 7:10—last month's issue—uploaded by Mal Burns because I said something about Second Life. Since both documents show Creative Commons BY-NC symbols in a sidebar and since there's no charge to use Scribd, the people who uploaded these issues acted legally and ethically.

## The Finish

One of the comments on Scalzi's brief post has this wonderful line: “You just have to love a story where no one can claim the white hat.”

Scribd was slow to take down items: We have Scalzi's own testimony in that regard. No white hat

there. SFWA's actions were at best sloppy, at worst incompetent—and, oddly, incompetent in a way that probably protects them from liability (the takedown requests weren't proper DMCA notices, so might not be subject to DMCA penalties for inappropriate use). EFF—well, I've never viewed EFF as having a particularly balanced or nuanced set of positions, so I shouldn't be surprised.

And yet, and yet. Apparently Scribd is taking things down and shutting down repeat infringers more readily than in the past. Clearly SFWA plans to find better ways to help authors protect their rights (and yes, I *absolutely* believe that authors have the moral and ethical rights to control their works—within limits). As that same commenter (“Tom”) also says:

Yes lots of poo flying right now (some deservingly in my opinion) but when it is over and done with. Scribd will be more careful with what they have on their site and the SFWA will make sure they stop making asses of themselves. (I hope.)

A sideshow, yes. But not an irrelevant sideshow. Balancing rights is tricky—particularly when the whole concept of balanced rights may be foreign to some parties. The rights of an author are *not* absolute. They never have been; they should not be.

Oh, and in closing: It's “SFWA” rather than “SFFWA” because it was originally the Science Fiction Writers of America—and because the membership decided to retain the initialism.

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## Making it Work

Both pieces of this essay have been troublesome, but within this issue's context (incidents and sideshows) maybe less so. I've tended to stay away from “Library 2.0” since last Fall—but the discussions have continued and seemingly heated up over the last couple of months. I'm seeing history rewriting along the lines of “Nobody ever said...” and other strawman claims. I'm also seeing interesting and thoughtful discussions, sometimes arising from confrontational beginnings and moving toward useful ends. Part of me, particularly given my current work situation, wants to pull my head in and ignore the whole thing—particularly because I believe it is a sideshow in the larger context of making good libraries even better.

If I was smart enough to do the sensible thing, I'd probably be rich or at least richer. Most of what follows is indeed about Library 2.0 and related discussions—but it's different in tone and intent than my original notes. I'm not planning to nail “Nobody ever

said that..." and "strawman" claims, at least not yet: After all, librarians with attention spans longer than squirrels and any sort of searching skills should have little trouble dealing with those claims and locating the supposed strawmen. Heck, *Cites & Insights* 6:2 ([citesandinsights.info/civ6i2.pdf](http://citesandinsights.info/civ6i2.pdf)) will suffice in some cases. I'm not trying to build a coherent picture of the "sides" in this set of discussion, partly because there aren't really clearcut sides (except to those who attempt to exclude the middle). What I'm doing here is noting some interesting comments that seem worth repeating and thinking about, with my own commentary as appropriate, along with one-paragraph notes that can point you to two sets of conversations that I'm *not* commenting on at any length.

Then there's an essay I wrote several months ago and held to see what developed. Nothing has, and I'm including it here because, as a loyal long-term ALA member, it still bothers me.

### Getting It

First a few words about "getting it." When you say, "You just don't get it," you're foreclosing discussion and asserting there's only one right answer. "You just don't get it" is *not* equivalent to "You haven't tried this" or "You aren't aware of the reasons for this" or other assertions of ignorance.

Asserting ignorance (that is, lack of information on a specific topic) is value-neutral. I'm ignorant of the syntax of C++ and the details of how pieces of XML fit together, and I'll freely admit that. If I needed to know either one, I'd learn. To get closer to library discussions, I'm ignorant of the differences between AACRII and RDA. So far, that hasn't mattered to me, so I haven't attempted to learn. If you tell me I'm not aware of the reasons for RDA, I'll agree—and if you give me a reason to care, I'll listen to the reasons and maybe try to learn more.

I can't imagine anyone telling me "You just don't get RDA." So far, nobody's responded to my decision that Twitter doesn't work for me by saying "You just don't get Twitter"—but people come very close to that with, for example, Second Life. First there's the assertion that you can't say anything negative about Second Life until you've tried it. Then, when you've tried it and found it wanting, the response is that you haven't tried it *enough*—where "enough" appears to be however long it takes you to decide it's wonderful. More likely, however, the comment will be "You just don't get Second Life." At which point discussion comes to an end, since the only real rejoinder is "Oh, I get it—I just don't want it."

"Just don't get it" is *automatically* confrontational. I don't believe it has any place in a discussion of "Library 2.0" or social networks or social software or the need for all (or most) libraries to do X, whatever X happens to be. If there are good arguments, *make them*. If people don't understand what's going on, *educate them*. But if you think "just don't get it" is either an argument or non-confrontational, well, what can I say: You just don't get it.

## Library 2.0-Related Discussions

Start with Jeff Scott, the public manager who posts at *Gather no dust* ([gathernodust.blogspot.com](http://gathernodust.blogspot.com)). In "The distance between here and 2.0" (June 14, 2007), he notes how easy it is to become overloaded "with so many 2.0 products coming out and so many people talking about how great they are."

On the other end, you have librarians frustrated that libraries are not moving fast enough. Some people seem to be always unsatisfied.

From an administrator's position, I would prefer someone else take the lead I can follow rather than go it alone. The problem is that if we try something drastic with our budget or staff, and it goes badly, then it can affect the general progress. Allowing someone else to experiment and explore is what is great about blogs. Look at someone else, how are they doing it, how are they implementing it...

You need to always explore options, then, once tested by another, simply adapt your system. You risk nothing and gain everything. You don't become typecast as a "bleeding edge person" and you don't get burned out by trying to keep that image up. Too many bloggers are trying to capture the bright and shiny so that they can be the first. It never works. Someone is always faster, goes on less sleep, and knows more tricks than you. Don't try to be that person, be you. Find what is useful and leave the rest, it is the only way to survive in this changing world.

The post includes a hand-drawn line with "Hell no, I won't go" at the left end, "2.0 Fanatics Bright and Shiny" at the right—and "You need to be here" just a little to the right of center. Terry Dawson liked the graphic and hopes he's in the middle, but adds a comment that's all too true: "It's characteristic that people who are closer to the ends of the scale will see people in the middle as being on the other end."

Some libraries, some librarians, are in better shape to experiment than others. That varies depending on the experiment. Scott also says, correctly I believe, "Too often we hear how a library is doing something great, but not details on how they got there." We need more *detailed* success stories, not along the lines of "We did this, and so should you"

but “Here’s what we did, how we did it, why it worked *for us*”—so librarians can learn and see what does (and doesn’t) apply in their community, with their patrons and resources.

Are “Library 2.0” tools being sold as must-haves because they’re what the patrons use and expect? Are you sold on patrons becoming active participants in all aspects of library operations—and satisfied that if you build it they will come? It’s rarely that simple. Note that the median number of comments per blog in *Public Library Blogs: 252 Examples* over a three-month period in 2007 was **zero**: 134 of the blogs had no comments and only 93 had more than one.

### *Saying Maybe?*

A while back there was some back-and-forth about saying Yes to new ideas. Brian Mathews offers another tack in “Applied prototyping: designing for buy-in,” posted July 3, 2007 at *Designing better libraries* ([dbl.ishost.org/blog/](http://dbl.ishost.org/blog/)). Most of the post:

I’ve found [prototyping] to be a useful technique when presenting new ideas. It’s one thing to sit around in a committee and intellectualize, but it is very different when you have a model to work with.

I experienced this first hand when trying to launch a reference desk wiki. I presented the idea (with just words) at a meeting and received blank stares. A few months later I demonstrated a PB Wiki with actual content and received more enthusiasm. However it didn’t take off as I had hoped. People bought into the idea, but the follow through was absent. A year later I’m trying again, but this time ramping it up by trying to pull in several departments to raise the stature and value... Hopefully by providing a prototype it will communicate the purpose, and staff members will feel that they can contribute, rather than just saying *here’s what we’re going to do now*. We’re seeking a conversation rather than just issuing commands.

When I speak with librarians who are excited about new social technology, they often mention the roadblocks they encounter. The best advice I can give is to use prototyping. Build a proof-of-concept, test it with a few users, and then present it to the powers-that-be. Instead of giving them the chance to shoot down your idea, let them see it first hand, educate them about it, and show them see how it can be adapted. The secret is user needs—if you can demonstrate how your idea addresses a patron (or staff) need then you’ll have greater chance of success... Prototyping helps other people to understand your vision, but also forces you to figure it out more yourself.

Mathews extols leadership “that doesn’t always say YES or NO right away, but asks for more.” An effective prototype can provide more—and with some web tools, the prototype *becomes* the implementation.

### *Reinventing Ourselves...or Not*

Maybe this belongs in “generation generalizations” rather than Library 2.0, but I think there’s a distinct relationship. Wayne Bivens-Tatum posted “Thoughts on the millennials” at *Academic librarian* ([blogs.princeton.edu/librarian/](http://blogs.princeton.edu/librarian/)) on July 5, 2007. Excerpts:

My disagreement with...the Millennial rhetoric in general, is not that libraries shouldn’t change or adapt, and even adapt quickly, but that the revolutionary rhetoric goes too far. Some librarians talk about “reinventing” everything these days, but reinventing the library might be as foolish as reinventing the wheel.

We have an obligation to integrate today’s students into a culture of research and learning. Adapting ourselves to current communication styles is fine as long as we remember that. We should know our ends so we can choose our means. We should always ask ourselves what we lose by scrapping the way we have done things. A healthy attitude to change doesn’t involve reinventing everything every generation, but always reevaluating what we have and deciding whether to keep it, keeping the best and discarding the rest...

...Instead of reinventing ourselves completely to try to cater to [Millennials’] expectations of instant gratification, perhaps we should try instead to alter their unrealistic expectations. Scholarly research does not offer instant gratification... By including students in the culture of scholarship, we are instead offering them the lasting gratification of knowledge and skill that comes with mastering a topic, however small that topic may be...

The question isn’t necessarily whether we should attempt new ways to communicate with the Millennial students. Of course we should. The question is why. Why are we trying new ways to communicate with the current generation of college students? Is it just to deliver to them everything they think they want, or to integrate them into the tradition of research, scholarship, and thought?

Bivens-Tatum also objects to thinking of academic library users (especially students) as “customers”—and the “customer” stance is bothersome in public libraries as well, although in different ways. Where students are concerned, is it *really* reasonable to argue that academic libraries should give ‘em what they want under all circumstances, rather than being part of the educational experience?

Steven Chabot continues this discussion in his July 12, 2007 post at *Subject/object* ([subjectobject.net](http://subjectobject.net/)), “The library: Where we’ve come from, where we are going, and what drives us.” *Very* brief excerpts from a post worth reading on its own (and with its links):

Some [proposed library changes seem] almost completely unproblematic, such as promoting access to the Internet, and the unprecedented opportunities it pre-

sents both consuming, interacting and creating the information and knowledge which makes us grander human beings. Others, without a firm grasp of our concept of the library, can be more questionable, such as the conversion of the library into a cultural center for “Millennials” (quoting John Blyberg) with video games and rock concerts.

To suggest a “fundamental change in [the] library’s mission” (again quoting) is needed right away fails to raise the question that possibly the aesthetic of the “Millennials” is not sustainable if our culture is to be informed and empowered enough to ask the tough questions of those in power, both in government and elsewhere...

...I think that much discussion on the Internet lacks a sufficient look at where we have come from, and what it is that defines us. These are the dual problems of the history and philosophy of the library.

Six days later, Chabot posted “The library 2.0 professional, and all the rest,” responding to posts elsewhere that question how professionals can still seem to hold an unwillingness to take on anything new. One of those posts (by Tyler Rousseau at *Library garden*) asks two provocative questions: “Why do we have professional librarians who refuse to keep up with the professional and technological requirements? How did we reach a point where the patrons’ needs were less important than the traditional way of doing things?”

I could poke at “the...technological requirements” as an apparently known and agreed list, but maybe I just don’t get it. I would also suggest that many patrons find their needs very well served by “the traditional way of doing things,” a “traditional way” that has been changing ever since libraries began. Chabot takes another tack. Most of Chabot’s response:

Of course we should always keep up with the times. Librarians have always been seen as the avant-garde of information technology (even beginning with the codex).

I think the real danger is to see technology as the complete solution...

Sometimes people just can’t have it cheap and easy. And the library has to keep promoting the hard and rewarding path **and** instruct (gasp!) patrons as to why that path is rewarding.

Going back to academic libraries—but also commenting on Rousseau’s questions—Laura Cohen uses a fairly broad brush in explaining “why the librarian profession has, as a whole, fallen behind the times.” Her post, *Holding us back*, appeared on July 13, 2007 at *Library 2.0: An academic’s perspective* ([liblogs.albany.edu/library20/](http://liblogs.albany.edu/library20/)), offers these three answers (excerpted):

1. **Our culture of optionalities**.... While our choices as individual institutions bring strength to the profession,

at some point a lack of coherent, profession-wide, aspirational standards is holding us back...

2. **2.0 is a great leap**. I’m of the opinion that the leap from 0.0 to 1.0 was a less significant one than the leap from 1.0 to 2.0... We had total control. It was our material, our input, our world... I think it’s much more difficult to let users into our spaces as active participants. Let them modify our Web pages? tag our catalog records? blog their opinions about us? mash up our content on other sites? This is a far more radical proposition than putting our content online and under our control.

3. **The speed of change**. Simply put, 2.0 has come along quite rapidly. This is hardly news, but it’s worth thinking about. Can we cut ourselves some slack? Much of what we see as dominant now in the 2.0 world didn’t exist just a few years ago. While we are a creative profession, we are not necessarily entrepreneurs...

I have a *lot* of trouble with this post. Cohen appears to call for uniform aspirations and goals, seems to assume that users are anxious to *be* in library spaces—and assumes a “dominance” of “2.0” things that I find unconvincing. As one who believes in locality and one who believes that most of us (most of the time) are *not* in a “2.0 world,” I probably can’t provide effective commentary on this post.

Cohen’s first answer here harks back to her May 24, 2007 post, “Our culture of optionalities.” While she pays lip service to “optionalities”—that is, paying attention to local needs—she also says they “can overtake us.”

Take two peer libraries with very similar profiles. Library A1 may decide to move ahead with creative initiatives while Library A2 may decide that the status quo is just fine. At some point, this discrepancy raises questions.

I can understand that local conditions shape outcomes. What I don’t understand is why these factors are so dominant in our profession. Why do we have so much choice? Is this an ultimate good?

I wish that academic libraries in this country would come together and plot a strategy for the future - say, the next five years. (That’s far enough ahead!) This is where, as I’ve said before, I look to ACRL standards. In part, this is because I don’t see that inspiring examples, or individual initiative, or the lucky confluence of the right conditions, are enough to create the imperatives for change. Since blogging about this notion a few months ago, I’ve come to make the connection between the lack of focused, future-oriented, aspirational standards and the fact that we’re floundering in a sea of optionalities.

I can’t guarantee that better ACRL standards would entirely solve this problem. I can’t guarantee that any such efforts would satisfy everyone. In fact, they would not. Try meeting the needs of those who are hot to implement a culture of 2.0, those who believe that integration should come first, those who advocate for social schol-

arship above all else, those who believe that scholarly communication, or digitization, or going where users are, or any number of priorities are the key. It would take a fair amount of courage to work on such an effort.

This is a case where I truly *don't* get it. Cohen's final sentence may provide a clue: "What else [other than ACRL standards] can fill the gap between our culture of optionality and a vigorous engagement with the future?"

How is it necessary *or advisable* for all academic libraries to be equally "vigorously engaged" with "the future"? Are academic libraries actually "floundering" because each library treats itself as part of a distinctive institution with distinctive needs and missions (and resources and patrons and...)? "The imperatives for change" seems to be a call for *everyone* to accept and implement some unstated change requirements. What requirements? To "implement a culture of 2.0" (where there is no agreement as to what "a culture of 2.0" is)?

I believe any serious attempt to create a single set of "imperative change" priorities for all academic libraries, especially a set coupled to "2.0," could do serious damage to the libraries' effectiveness within their institutions and, thus, to academic libraries as a whole—but, of course, I'm not an academic librarian. Fortunately, any such initiative seems about as likely to succeed as the National Library Agenda promoted by forces within ALA in late 2006. What? You say you haven't heard about the National Library Agenda? There's a reason for that... (See later in this essay.)

Maybe there should be ACRL standards for academic libraries. For those standards to include a set of imperatives for implementation of "Library 2.0" initiatives...well, next time someone says "Nobody ever said every academic library should..." it's worth pointing to this post and noting that you don't need to use those precise words to say everyone should be doing something. "Standards" and "imperatives" and "a strategy" all add up to a situation in which any library not going along is explicitly viewed as defective.

T. Scott Plutchak speaks to these issues in "Avoiding the poles," an August 30, 2007 post at *T. Scott* (tscott.typepad.com). He's commenting on an Eric Schnell post from August 28, 2007, "CAUTION: Paradigm shift ahead" (ericschnell.blogspot.com) and finds himself "leery of proclamations of 'paradigm shift.'"

Scott notes (in part):

The difficulty in applying Kuhn's concept [of paradigm shift] to librarianship is that you have to actually be able to define the difference between the two paradigms. The dilemma that the 2.0 enthusiasts have is that not only have they been unable to come up with a coherent definition of Library 2.0, they've been even worse at defining Library 1.0. If you pick through the various postings

and comments, you come up with something like "the traditional librarian is resistant to change, fears technology, and doesn't want to let the users have any control over their experience of the library." While there is no doubt that there have been librarians who fit that description, surely that has never been the *paradigm* of what a librarian is supposed to be! Librarians who fit that description aren't *traditional* librarians--they're just not very good librarians. Never have been.

Then we get to the heart of the matter—where Schnell is quoting John Blyberg, in another one of those statements handy to have when people say Library 2.0 advocates are non-confrontational:

Like two distinct brands of the same religion, librarians are drifting into two camps—those that believe libraries are in peril and those that don't. Those who find themselves as a member of the former tend to feel that their libraries need to change in a number of fundamental ways in order to remain relevant. Those who identify with the latter group feel that good old-fashion librarianship is still what their users want or need. They're the purists.

This is a neat case of excluding the middle. If you don't believe "libraries are in peril" then you're a "purist" who believes in "good old-fashioned librarianship." All those who believe libraries should continue to change and should build from strength while *also* believing that libraries and their relevance are not in peril? We're the excluded middle: If you're not in one camp, you must be in the other.

I reject that notion. So, it appears, does Plutchak. But Schnell is indeed "a librarian inclined to think that libraries are at risk"—and his definition of the "two camps" excludes the middle:

We have the emergence of a new technology driven/focused definition of what a library is and is contrasted with the existing traditionalist definition highlighted by reference librarians sitting at desks. These are the two camps that John identifies.

Is there a coherent "technology driven/focused definition of what a library is"? Does it exclude traditional reference service (presumably augmented by IM reference and roaming reference as appropriate)? Schnell uses Kuhn's "paradigm" concept, which views the camps as irreconcilable, and says that the next generation of "library scientists graduating from library school will be hardwired to naturally accept the technology driven/focused definition of a library." I hope not. For that matter, most Library 2.0 advocates claim they're interested in *patron*-centered, *patron*-driven libraries—not ones driven or focused by technology.

Getting back to Plutchak, he wonders (as do I) just what Blyberg's "fundamental ways" that libraries need to change are—and "what it means to say that

'libraries are in peril?'" Plutchak argues that libraries *are* less relevant than they were generations ago—but that doesn't make them irrelevant.

I'm not really worried about libraries. There are so many examples of great, vibrant libraries of all types out there that it seems silly to me to go around proclaiming that the sky is falling unless we all embrace... what?

Plutchak proposes a fundamental shift, one I believe is more relevant to special libraries and some academic libraries than to public libraries: A shift away from the physical library as the primary locus of activity. That's another discussion, one I leave to those more directly involved.

"The.effing.librarian" posted "What the hell is wrong with libraries? (Nothing.)" on August 31, 2007 (effinglibrarian.blogspot.com). I'd treat posts on this pseudonymous blog no more seriously than on any other such blog, but "effing" makes interesting points. "Effing" finds themselves irritated by the criticism that "Libraries are not intuitive," pointing out that grocery stores and department stores aren't intuitive either—but, as with good libraries, they have signage and people figure it out. "People are not completely stupid. To say that libraries need to change to become more like bookstores or Amazon just says to me that you think people are too stupid to figure out libraries."

Sure effing may be overstating the situation; that's what pseudonymous bloggers do. Effing's examples are sound enough—for example, shopping for fish at a supermarket:

Guess what, the grocery store doesn't put fresh fish near the canned fish or near the frozen fish just because it's all fish. Customers learn where to look and they remember. We just need to do a better job of teaching them where and how to look.

Effing isn't the only one to object to Amazon *or* bookstores as a model for ease of finding:

People say they like Amazon because they find what they want. That's a freaking lie. You don't find what you want, but you find something that's close enough. It's just that most people don't know what they want, so they're satisfied with the results from an Amazon search. Unless I have an ISBN or other identifying number, I'm rarely able to find what I want on the first try.

Bookstores want you to buy *something*—as they should, being businesses. Getting you rapidly to the thing you originally wanted? Not so much.

When libraries adopt online catalogs that mimic online retailers, which are keyword and recommendation based and less accurate, then they risk losing one of those cornerstone characteristics of the profession: authority. And then the point of cataloging things accurately no longer means shit.

Overstatement? Maybe. Libraries in peril? Maybe not.

### *Libraries or Librarians?*

Ryan Deschamps offered a provocative suggestion in an August 15, 2007 post at *The other librarian* (otherlibrarian.wordpress.com): "We asked for 2.0 libraries and we got 2.0 librarians." He looks back to a September 1, 2006 *Library Journal* article—nearly a year after the "movement" began—and offers some perspectives, **well worth reading on their own**. Excerpts:

My sense is that the prominence of the Library 2.0 moniker has plateaued and we are about to see put it in with nostalgia-inducing sayings such as "groovy" and "smashing." I see the obsolescence of the phrase as an indicator of success. Sure, it was hype. But as hype it did exactly what it was supposed to do: raise awareness of a problem and get people thinking about possible solutions...

The success of library 2.0, as is to be expected, has been mixed. That was kind of the point anyway. Library 2.0 was, in part, a way of seeing success in failure—we had to learn to play, take risks, fail, and learn from the process. In short, the library 2.0 movement was not really about changing libraries, but changing librarians. Librarians needed our time in the sun, and now that we are getting our time. Now that we are popular, hopefully we will see that we need to clean our houses before we invite people in...

...I've seen many examples of people who looked beyond the time, space and resources of their workplace to offer better services to clients. Lots of librarians I have met started blogs and shared notes for conferences. Lots of librarians plugged their noses to try things like Second Life, Facebook, Twitter, and a whole range of other Web 2.0 tools...

There's no doubt that Library 2.0 got librarians to learn about themselves and the world of information they live in. But, considering the "user focus" that supposedly went with Library 2.0, did our brains translate into actual services?

Libraries are moving slowly on comments or tags in catalog front-ends...and he explains why. Web 2.0 services? "The interesting part of [libraries using Flickr, YouTube, Facebook, etc.] is the fine line between library services and library promotions. If we put an RSS feed on a MySpace page, is that service or a promotion of a traditional service." He thinks it's good either way: "there is a lot of benefit to engaging these services to help boost library usage, particularly among young people."

Then there's globalization—the promotion of "library" rather than "*your* local library." Is that a good thing? I'm skeptical—and I'm not sure where Deschamps stands. A little more:

Library 2.0 has produced some minor benefits to library services, but hardly the radical change of model that was

proposed in the article about a year ago. The changes that have occurred, in my view, are hardly noticeable to the average customer because, for the most part, the actual changes in services are merely logical extensions to what libraries have done all along.

So, can we call Library 2.0 a lukewarm success? A failure? A waste of time and resources? To do so would be to misunderstand libraries on the whole. Libraries are largely democratic institutions and as democratic institutions they should change not with the rapid pace of technology, but with the slower pace of society. Library 2.0 should happen when Society 2.0 develops—and that means once we have a majority of converted folks. That puts libraries on the “late adopter” part of the adoption curve, to the chagrin of many a library 2.0 advocate I am sure.

This doesn't mean that librarians should be on the “late adopter” side of the curve, however. The largest benefit of Library 2.0 has been a radical change in the core service that libraries offer—namely, librarians (and by “librarians,” I mean anyone who works in a library).

Deschamps thinks “Library 2.0 has done a lot for the library world”—not through institutions but through “a steadily increasing change of heart in librarians on the whole. Harp on hype all you want—Library 2.0 needed to happen and the world is better off because of it.”

Jennifer Macauley tends to agree with Deschamps in an August 15, 2007 *Life as I know it* post (scruffyn-erf.wordpress.com), saying in part:

For me, the most important part of library 2.0 has been the discussions that have taken place around it. It has made me work to view the library and its services from a different angle, to take a step outside of my comfort zone and to challenge my previously held thoughts and beliefs. Has it created significant changes in the way that I do things? Honestly, no. It has altered the ways in which I think about end goals of my projects - but not necessarily changed the projects themselves. To me, this means that I agree with Ryan about the importance of library 2.0.

There's a caveat: Macauley “would not elevate [Library 2.0] above other, earlier trends in librarianship—ripe with their own buzzwords that made the rounds of library literature and conferences.”

Laura Cohen disagrees, in a strongly-worded August 29, 2007 *Library 2.0: An academic's perspective* post “Academic libraries and 2.0.” Cohen says she's not seeing “thoughts about what makes Library 2.0 different for academic libraries than other types of libraries”—and uses Deschamps' thesis as a case in point. First, she dismisses the value of “librarian 2.0”: “If librarians have changed and their institutions have not, what have we really accomplished?” Then she says Deschamps' perspective is “not workable in an academic library setting.”

Cohen asserts that academic libraries should be early adopters of “Library 2.0” *as part of their educational mission*:

The roles of academic librarians include, very importantly, educational and leadership roles. These roles can be manifested formally, in teachable moments, and also by the library environment itself. It's our mission to support students and faculty in their academic pursuits. This means seeking out and supporting the profound changes in the way research and scholarship are pursued in a rapidly-evolving 2.0 culture. In order to accomplish this, we librarians and our institutions need to move along together.

After enumerating some librarian roles, she says:

All of this argues for early adoption of Library 2.0 in academic libraries. As Society 2.0 (Ryan's term) emerges—and it's doing exactly that—we need to be ahead of the curve for our faculty and students. Society 2.0 is becoming their world, and they need to engage in it now.

I would argue with “and it's doing exactly that,” except that I haven't the vaguest idea what “Society 2.0” would be. In any case, Cohen's explicitly arguing that academic librarians need to be “ahead of [users].” Yes, good educators should prepare students for “the future,” but Cohen's prescription assumes a known and certain “2.0 world” as *the future*. Cohen provides five examples of “next steps” that will “shift paradigms to a much greater degree”—and I'll quote the first of the steps in its entirety:

**Foundational 2.0 Web spaces.** By foundational, I mean that the sites are based on 2.0, rather than 2.0 being tacked on to existing 1.0 spaces. Such spaces would be participatory, conversational, wikified, blogified, visualized, data aggregated, contextually helpful, relevancy ranked, faceted searchable, and taggable, among other things.

I honestly don't understand this. I don't get the concept of “spaces” except as they support some aspect of the library's mission. Nor do I see how an existing service enhanced with social-software capabilities is fundamentally inferior to—or even different from—something “based on 2.0” from the beginning. I'm sorely in need of examples.

Cohen's posts in this section seem confrontational and impatient. She seems to be urging *all* academic libraries to sign on to an ambitious national agenda and to be out front of the academy itself in moving toward a “2.0 society” (whatever that might be). With that in mind, I found her September 6, 2007 post “A good meeting” particularly interesting. She cites some responses of middle managers at her library to proposals for fairly sweeping “2.0” initiatives:

Users aren't asking us for 2.0 types of things.



RSS as a means of information updates is a problem because we're having issues with support. Lots of users don't know how to deal with feeds.

Our students wouldn't blog if I didn't require them to contribute to my course blog.

Facebook is what students care about now, not blogging or anything else, and I've heard that students don't even want us there.

What's particularly interesting is Cohen's response. Not "they just don't get it," but this:

While these kinds of remarks might come across as skepticism about 2.0, I saw them as reflecting something else on the part of these managers: an interest in serving users well, and in putting their always-limited time into things that matter.

She suggests examples of 2.0 technologies that could improve services to users. Without arguing specifics, some of the examples are reasonable on their merits: As ways to *improve a library* using available techniques, not as ways to sneak 2.0 into the library. And then there's this:

I mentioned that we're in the very early years of figuring out best practices in using 2.0 tools. If something isn't quite working out right now, then experimentation with different strategies might bring about better results. Eventually, maybe something should be dropped—that is what experimentation is all about.

While I'll suggest that best strategies for improving library service to patrons might *not* always involve 2.0 tools—the goal should be “best practices for good library service” rather than “best practices in using 2.0 tools”—I find this fascinating because Cohen recognizes this is not a settled or well-defined landscape.

Good librarians stay informed on new possibilities. Good librarians look for ways to improve patron involvement and service, using whatever tools are available—and look for interesting new tools based on apparent needs and possibilities. Does that make them Librarians 2.0? I dunno.

### *Other Comments on 2.0ness*

Joshua M. Neff posted “Library 2.0.0.3” on August 21, 2007 at *the goblin in the library* ([www.goblin-cartoons.com](http://www.goblin-cartoons.com)). He shows surprise at the resurgence of Library 2.0 discussions:

It's a funny ol' world, isn't it? Just when you think an idea has run its course or become so commonplace that it's nearly invisible, it comes back into the spotlight, like John Travolta.

He adds an articulate and interesting discussion of what *he* thinks Library 2.0 is (at least as of August 21, 2007)—and uses Darlene Fichter's equation for Library 2.0: “Library 2.0 = (books'n stuff + people + radical

trust) x participation.” Interesting—and other than “radical trust” (a tricky term), it raises the question of whether something is Library 2.0 if most patrons aren't really interested in participating. Is it enough to offer participation if that offer goes mostly unaccepted?

Neff does *not* think Library 2.0 inherently involves new technologies: “I think a library *can* use new technologies and tools (like blogs, wikis, IM, SMS) to achieve ‘2.0-ness,’ but only if those tools are the right tools for the job.” That job, as Neff sees it? “The library as an interactive, user-friendly platform; an architecture of participation that encourages users to add value to the library as they use it; social networking; perpetual beta.” If you define “perpetual beta” as “open to continuous improvement” rather than “untested and may crash at any moment,” I agree.

The next section is much longer and **deserves to be read on its own**. Neff admits “Library 2.0” is to some extent “just a buzzword for what libraries have always done,” where “always” equates to most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The details and possibilities are changing, as he notes—I could not have done this publication in 1990, and couldn't be collecting quotes directly from blogs in 1998.

Neff does *not* think Library 2.0 is “some sort of ‘state of being’ that one reaches.” Instead, “I think Library 2.0 is what libraries have been for a while now, but acknowledging and being excited about the fact that the times they are a'changin'.” A sentiment with which I agree, expressed in words used by Bob Dylan *fortythree years ago*.

The “virtual librarian” commented “on 2.0ness” at *virtually a librarian* ([blog.virtuallyalibrarian.com](http://blog.virtuallyalibrarian.com)) on August 12, 2007. Noting comments by John Blyberg and David Lee King, “virtual” is part of what I'd consider the growing middle ground:

The technology is not the end; rather, it's the means to the end. In my work, providing and promoting online services is the end. 2.0 technologies are one set of tools I can use to facilitate this. But it's no good implementing the tools for the sake of playing with technology (not in a service delivery context, anyway - I certainly play for play's sake in my own time). The tool has got to fit the job... It's no good saying “Twitter is cool. Let's start tweeting”, if we have no real need to Tweet.

David Lee King's spectrum is interesting, but it's kind of like, to get over to the 'enlightened' side, you need to tick the boxes--get a flickr account, start an IM service, get a library blog... I'm just concerned that sometimes we're (I'm?) ticking the boxes for the sake of ticking the boxes. That we're getting 2.0 because it's the thing to do, not because it's what we need to do to deliver robust, responsive, needed services. I think we should

choose carefully from the swag of 2.0 tools those that will help us in meeting the end towards which we're working, rather than those that we can kinda sorta use if we try really hard.

Note to self: define the end, then pick the tool. And don't get (too) caught up in the shininess.

Ryan Deschamps offers a different perspective of "Library 2.0" in "My interpretation of Library 2.0 in strategic terms," posted at *The other librarian* on June 6, 2007. He wanted a definition that focused on strategy rather than theory and buzzwords and arrived at this set of five (with the third modified based on the rest of the post):

1. Understand social aspects of the web (Web 2.0), and exploit them to build community.
2. Emphasize innovation over elbow grease.
3. Don't let institutional barriers get in the way.
4. Favor the wisdom of diverse, independent and decentralized "crowds" over the authority of elites.
5. Empathize (obsessively) with the user's experience, and invite their participation.

If I would argue with anything here, it would be #4: I think librarians should favor a blend of authority and crowd "wisdom"—taxonomy and folksonomy, if you will. Otherwise, it's an interesting approach that is indeed relatively free of buzzwords (although the "wisdom of crowds" is a buzzphrase).

### David Lee King and the Annoyed Librarian

I had two other piles of printouts here that could easily occupy another five or six print pages of quotes and commentary—two or three pages on David Lee King's "Library 2.0 spectrum" and ensuing comments and posts, another three or four pages on posts by the *Annoyed librarian* and reactions to those posts.

I'm not going to go through either of them except to note a few pointers—for different reasons. In the case of David Lee King, what started out as a slightly confrontational piece (particularly with "Luddite" and a book at one end of a spectrum or vector) became an interesting multipart conversation generating considerably more light than heat, almost a model of what discussion and disagreement *should* be in the liblog community. In the case of Annoyed...well, while he/she/they/it do[es] raise some interesting and provocative points at times, the posts function more as a sideshow than to move serious (or even lighthearted) discussion forward.

#### David Lee King

Start with "Am I a 2.0 librarian and the Library 2.0 spectrum" (August 1, 2007, *david lee king* www.dav-

idleeking.com) and "Library 2.0 spectrum thingie—asking for your input" (August 2, 2007, same blog). Make sure you read the comments and some of the other posts, and don't miss either Steve Lawson's "Writing and talking about librarian 2.0" (August 3, 2007, *See also...*, [stevelawson.name/seealso/](http://stevelawson.name/seealso/)) or John Blyberg's "The information experience" (August 9, 2007, *blyberg.net*, [www.blyberg.net](http://www.blyberg.net)) and the comments on those posts. Then go back to David Lee King's blog for "Library 2.0 ripples—another go at the graph" (August 24) and "Question for you guys/gals about the newness of Library 2.0" (August 30, 2007). I've left out some intermediate steps and many reactions—and despite David Lee King's continued use of "customer" for patron, I have to say his "Library 2.0 ripples" graphic is really interesting.

#### Annoyed Librarian

You could just ignore her/them/it/him, but I'm not sure this pseudonymous blogger (or team) is a solitary voice. I'd suggest starting with "A librarian's anti-2.0 manifesto" at *Annoyed librarian* [henceforth "AL"] (August 20, 2007, [annoyedlibrarian.blogspot.com](http://annoyedlibrarian.blogspot.com)), continue with *at least* Meredith Farkas' "Divisions, dogma, and just doing a good job" (August 22, 2007, *Information wants to be free* [[meredith.wolfwater.com/wordpress/](http://meredith.wolfwater.com/wordpress/)]) and probably some other reactions. Then back to AL for "The cult of twopointopia" (August 27, 2007) and Ryan Deschamps' "Welease Wibrarian tWopoint Oooo" (August 29, 2007, *The other librarian*) if not other reactions. Back again to AL for "An alternative voice in librarianship" (August 30, 2007)—and then at least to David Lee King's "The Annoyed Librarian is annoyed with me" (August 30, 2007), Meredith Farkas' "Do we need a translator here?" (August 30, 2007), Roy Tennant's "Voices of reason" (August 30, 2007, [www.libraryjournal.com/blog/](http://www.libraryjournal.com/blog/)), "virtual librarian's "the sound of a holy war": on twopointopia" (August 31, 2007), and Jason Griffey's "Twopointopians" (September 3, 2007, *Pattern recognition* [[www.jasongriffey.net/wp/](http://www.jasongriffey.net/wp/)]). Maybe finish up—for now—with a *very* different post: Wayne Bivens-Tatum's "The Juvenal of librarianship" at *Academic librarian* (September 4, 2007). Or you could skip the whole thing as a sideshow. Any comment from me would be superfluous.

### Towards a National Library Agenda

This January 11, 2007 document from ALA president Leslie Burger to ALA unit managers is troublesome—for me, at least, as a somewhat loyal (and very long-term) ALA member but one who doesn't buy into

every ALA practice or “national agendas” as inherently positive. The cover document asks “ALA units as well as the broader library community to help shape this Agenda by reviewing this draft document and sending me a summary of your feedback”—essentially calling on divisions and the like to add this item to their Midwinter 2007 agenda. The draft document itself, a five-page PDF, is at [wikis.ala.org/nationallibraryagenda/images/f/f4/Discussion\\_Draft\\_MW\\_2007\\_final\\_1-11-07.pdf](http://wikis.ala.org/nationallibraryagenda/images/f/f4/Discussion_Draft_MW_2007_final_1-11-07.pdf). That’s part of a wiki for the agenda.

Here are the six major elements of the draft agenda, each supported by some text and a group of bulleted agenda items:

- Libraries preserve the past and provide a bridge to the future.
- Libraries build and strengthen communities.
- Libraries support lifelong learning.
- Libraries create information and technology literate communities.
- Libraries encourage economic development.
- Libraries support democracy.

How can I oppose any of those? I can’t and don’t. Nor do I argue with many of the bulleted items or the draft statement headed “The American Public Deserves:” It’s feel-good and pretty much on the money.

So what’s the problem? Two words: process and National.

The process is classic ALA, particularly at the presidential initiative level: An invitational summit with Important People gathered to develop the agenda. Preceded, to be sure, by lots of conversation—but developed in an essentially closed meeting.

Then the president calls on divisions and other units to pay attention—to favor her agenda over their own. Then there’s a call for feedback. And then it gets treated as a National Agenda.

Maybe it’s because I’ve rarely (if ever) been invited to Invitational Summits, but they bother me as a way to set policy—particularly for an association like ALA. I don’t see a call for divisions to ratify or modify the agenda—the first question Burger asks is “Are you willing to support the concept of a broadly stated National Library Agenda that can be translated into action at the local, state and federal levels?” followed by one about specific priorities and a third: “What actions would your unit/division take to address these Agenda items?” The train’s leaving the station: Will you be on board, and how much fare will you pay?

Then there’s National. Here I admit to being an ALA heretic. I’m never going to be ALA president, but when I was LITA vp/president, I was unwilling to set forth a LITA Agenda, a single direction that all units

within the division should support. I’ve seen that tried—cases where all programs were supposed to relate to the division’s agenda for the year—and it’s usually had one of three effects:

- Utter failure for the president but success for the division, as committees and interest groups organize programs that meet their needs and the needs of the library community, not a leader’s agenda.
- Pseudo-success as diverse programs carry titles and descriptions suggesting a connection to the overall agenda, even though the suggestion is mostly window dressing.
- “Success” as many programs do indeed follow the agenda—and the division has a weaker and less generally relevant set of programs as a result.

I was lucky. The ALA VP for my class had no pretensions of grandeur: She knew damn well that divisions weren’t going to bend their own programs and agendas to her overarching vision, and didn’t try to push it.

Beyond the Annual Conference itself, National Library Agendas bother me because American libraries are so intensely local at their best. If a national agenda is general enough not to interfere with that localization, it’s a set of nice statements that don’t amount to much. If it’s action-oriented then it *must* (to some extent) interfere with local decisions.

I may be entirely wrong here. It’s hard to tell how things are going from the wiki itself, except that it may be too open or too lightly monitored: It’s been heavily spammed, *very* heavily spammed, and there doesn’t seem to be much of any “discussion” other than spam. (A few months later, I see that the only apparent change to the wiki is that Jenny Levine has removed the spam.)

I may be wasting energy expressing *any* concern about the National Library Agenda other than my usual grump about invitational summits handing down The Message. From what I can see in blogs, Technorati, Ask, Google and what’s not spam on the wiki, the extent of discussion on the agenda since ALA Midwinter is strikingly close to zero. I’d hate to say “What if you threw a Summit and nobody cared?” but that sure seems to be what’s happening here.

## Perspective: Tracking High-Def Discs **The Battle Continues**

I’ve read that 3% of American public libraries are now buying high-def DVDs—Blu-Ray, HD DVD or both. If that’s what *your community* wants, more power to you.

Blu-ray and HD DVD discs aren't much more expensive than regular DVDs and Blu-ray discs are *claimed* to be more durable than regular DVDs (with a new scratch-resistant coating). I assume most of these libraries are in high-tech or media-oriented communities—or maybe they have requests and a few hundred dollars (or Friends commitment) to meet them.

Meanwhile, the battle of the formats continues with claims and counterclaims. A Reuters story by Thomas K. Arnold on April 23, 2007 quotes *Home Media Magazine* (a trade magazine) saying 70% of high-def discs purchased in the first quarter of 2007 were Blu-ray discs; in March, nearly three of four discs were Blu-ray. Maybe more telling: Warner released *The Departed* in both formats on February 13—and from then through March 31, 2007 actual purchases totaled 53,640 Blu-ray copies and 31,590 HD DVD. (Actually, it's equally impressive that 85,000 high-def copies of a single movie sold in February and March—that's not much compared to regular DVDs, but it's not bad.) Total high-def disc sales in the quarter: nearly 1.2 million. It's far from being a *mass* medium, but it's beginning to be a significant niche.

A small *Wired News* item on April 18, 2007 was a “response” of sort from the HD DVD camp: More people have purchased dedicated HD DVD players than Blu-ray players. But the numbers are silly: 100,000 standalone HD DVD players in the U.S., plus another 150,000 Xbox360 drives—as compared to nearly 1.5 million Blu-ray drives, even if 1.4 million of those are in PlayStation 3s. And since Toshiba's been on the market with HD DVD for more than a year, while the first dedicated Blu-ray players only appeared last fall...well, it's a bit early to say “consumers prefer HD DVD.”

There's a rather odd story in the May 28, 2007 *Sydney Morning Herald*, “Blu-ray versus HD DVD.” It seems to pitch the battle as being between Sony on one side and Toshiba backed by Microsoft and Intel—but that ignores Pioneer, Philips, Samsung, LG and others. The article makes much of Samsung “breaking ranks” with Blu-ray by announcing a dual-format player—but Samsung announced such a player before it ever produced a Blu-ray player (then backed off). And, sigh, the omnipresent Rob Enderle claims Wal-Mart will flood the market with cheap HD DVD players this Christmas. The story also says the “Blu-ray hard line has begun to crumble among Hollywood studios,” but *there never was a hard line*. Quoting *C&I* 6:8 (June 2006): “Warner Brothers, Paramount, New Line, and HBO plan to release discs in both formats... HP, LG, and Samsung are backing both formats and

plan to develop ‘universal’ players that can handle both formats.” There are no “breaking ranks” here—but that makes a more exciting story.

“Blu-ray and HD DVD face off” in the June 2007 *Home Theater* (see later in “Player Reviews”) notes one oddity in comparing visual quality in the two formats: Most early Blu-ray releases were from Sony (Columbia et al) and were hurriedly done, with mediocre image quality—where Warner had dozens of well-mastered HD DVD releases available from the start. These days, by all accounts (including comparative reviews), current releases look equally good on both formats (most Blu-ray are apparently single-layer while most HD DVD are dual-layer, so storage capacity is similar).

In mid-July, Target announced it would sell Blu-ray drives but not HD DVD drives for the 2007 holiday season. That would appear to be a big competitive edge for Blu-ray. The HD DVD group pointed out that some Target stores (and Target online) *do* sell one HD DVD drive: The add-on to Microsoft's Xbox 360.

*PC World* for May 2007 devoted eight editorial pages to a “High-def video superguide.” At this stage of the game, when a tease says “Which next generation movie format is better: Blu-ray or HD DVD? Who makes the best high-definition player? And how can you play high-def discs on your PC? We have the answers” my skepticism comes into play. I don't believe that first question *can* be answered at this point, and the second can't be answered without defining “best” arbitrarily. How does *PC World* answer these questions?

- While admitting that HD DVD players *currently* offer more interactivity (but movie titles may not support it and people may not care), the writer concludes that “Blu-ray for now appears to be a better gamble than HD DVD, if only for the greater number of movie studios supporting the format.”
- The comparison of players includes an astonishing *nine* units: Three HD DVD (two second-generation Toshibas and the Xbox 360 add-on) and six Blu-ray (from Samsung, Philips, Sony, Pioneer, Panasonic—and the Sony PlayStation 3). They give Best Buy honors to the \$800 Samsung BD-P1000, but it's clearly not the “best” player for every buyer or every purpose. In fact, the images judged best were from the Pioneer Elite BDP-HD1 and Sony BDP-S1. Surprisingly, the \$500 Toshiba HD-A2 was the only regular player in either format to score less than Very Good for Detail (the Xbox 360 drive scored only Fair because it can only output analog video: it's rated as having “the worst picture and sound of the bunch by a wide margin”). For color quality, the HD-A2, Xbox 360, PlayStation 3 and

\$1,300 Panasonic DMP-BD10 all scored Good rather than Very Good. The editorial advice is to wait another six months.

- A section on playing high-def discs on PCs says “it’s going to cost you—not only in cash but also...in frustration.” The writer was able to play Blu-ray movies but had trouble with HD DVD, mostly because of DRM. Notably, all of these attempts were with add-on players.

Some people don’t think it matters—for various reasons. Dan Costa opines that most people will download their HD movies (in a June 26, 2007 *PC Magazine* column); he’s one of those who believes consumers don’t want discs in any case.

## DRM and the Real World

*PC Magazine* had the story on April 10; so did lots of other outlets. Namely, in February, crackers posted code essentially breaking DRM on Blu-ray and HD DVD discs. This should have come as no surprise. Not that this means huge quantities of HD piracy—the movies run 15GB to 50GB, which is a pretty hefty upload or download. Will it convince studios to accept that DRM harms people and doesn’t help them? Not likely. It’s even possible that studios will choose to update the DRM in a manner that breaks older players. Oddly, the cracking seems to leave Blu-ray at an advantage: It has another DRM technology that might make it easier to trace the source of copied movies.

## Player Reviews

*Sound & Vision* (May 2007) gives high marks to Toshiba’s higher-priced second-generation HD DVD player, the \$1,000 HD-XA2. It has better video processing (and distinctly better “upscaling” of DVDs), faster response, better stability and a smaller case. It’s the first high-def DVD player to reach the magazine’s “S&V’s Best” list—unless you count Sony’s PlayStation 3. You still don’t get 1080p/24fps output (the ideal for movies if your set can handle it properly), and it still won’t let you stop an HD DVD and pick up where you left off.

The April 2007 *Sound & Vision* includes a special report on the LG BH100 Super Multi Blue, a full-fledged Blu-ray player that can also play HD DVD discs—but without on-disc menus or special features. (It provides a generic navigation bar listing chapters and times.) It’s pricey (\$1,200) and *completely* lacks CD support, but it does a fine job with high-def discs and upconverts regular DVDs fairly well.

That issue also reviews a high-end Blu-ray player, the \$1,500 Pioneer Elite BDP-HD1. This player *also*

leaves out CD support—and it’s on the slow side for startup and disc loading. It does a great job with Blu-ray video—maybe the best to date—and upconverts DVDs well. It *does* support 1080p/24fps output. Oddly enough, while the player won’t handle CDs, it *will* play a DVD full of MP3s or WMA files.

The April 2007 *Home Theater* has an odd comparison article of five high-def players, using *Corpse Bride* (available in both formats) to compare them. The \$1,000 Philips BDP9000 “is essentially the Samsung BD-P1000” with a different case and better remote. Pioneer’s \$1,500 BDP-HD1 takes the longest to boot up and play—“well over 90 seconds”—and yields a “pristine image.” Sony’s \$500 PlayStation 3 only takes 25 seconds to go from Off to Play—but it doesn’t upconvert DVDs at all and its high-resolution output options are limited. A sidebar on the cheaper second-generation Toshiba HD DVD player (the \$500 HD-A2) says there’s no visible difference between HD DVD and Blu-ray on the same movie—and while startup time has improved, it’s still more than a minute from Off to Play. Finally, Samsung’s BD-P1000 no longer has the “softness” issue it originally did—and now it seems that most of this apparent softness was from poor early Blu-ray source material.

A June 2007 *Home Theater* comparison discusses Toshiba’s second-generation high-end HD DVD unit, the \$800 HD-XA2; the \$1,300 Panasonic DMP-BD10 Blu-ray player; and the \$1,300 LG BH100 Blu-ray unit that also plays HD DVDs. The Toshiba lacks 1080p/24fps output; it offers excellent picture quality and good DVD upconversion and is easier to use than the computer-disguised-as-a-player XA1—but it’s still noisy. (It plays DVD, DVD-R/W, and both prerecorded and recordable CD-R, but not DVD+R/RW.) The Panasonic also lacks 1080p/24fps but does offer Dolby Digital Plus and 7.1-channel analog output; it upconverts DVDs well. (It handles every flavor of DVD and CD, as well as DVD-Audio and various content formats such as MP3, WMA and SVCD.) The LG is a good Blu-ray player, peculiar HD DVD player and mediocre DVD player.

*PC Magazine* for May 22, 2007 offers side-by-side full-page reviews of two high-def set-top players, with mediocre ratings in both cases. The LG Super Blu Player falls down because of its limited HD DVD support and lack of 1080p/60 upconversion; it gets three dots out of five. Toshiba’s \$800 HD-XA2 does a little better at 3.5 dots, with 1080p output and excellent performance—but startup time is still long and DVD video showed jaggies.

## Drive Reviews

The June 26, 2007 *PC Magazine* reviews two Blu-ray drives. For \$650, the external OWC Mercury Pro SW-5582 offers fast Blu-ray burns but relatively slow DVD burns. How fast? Just over 43 minutes to burn a 22.5GB directory structure into an ISO file. It comes without software and gets a 2.5-dot rating. For considerably more money (\$1,050), the LaCie D2 Blu-ray Drive includes a good software bundle and offers comparable performance; it gets two dots. The comparable performance isn't surprising: Both are external devices based on the Panasonic SW-5582 internal drive.

## Coping with the Format War

LG's pricey dual-format player isn't the only way to get around the war between HD DVD and Blu-ray. Some studios have been issuing dual-format discs with regular DVD on one side, either Blu-ray or HD DVD on the other. Now Warner plans a different dual-format option: "Total Hi Def" discs with a Blu-ray version on one side, HD DVD on the other. Supposedly, we'll see such discs by the end of 2007; New Line and HBO also plan to release Total Hi Def discs.

## Conclusion

This is my last high-def DVD commentary for calendar 2007—and products that will be significant for the holiday season should be on the shelves by the end of September. I don't believe *anyone* expects to see huge sales of either format this year. Most estimates I've seen are in the low millions for players in the U.S. Here's what I see and what I'm guessing for this year, noting that these are *just guesses*:

- Circuit City appears to be pushing HD DVD pretty hard, although not excluding Blu-ray. That's interesting, given that Circuit City was the mastermind behind the miserable DivX (not the newer download format but the "cheap pay-per-play pseudo-DVD" disaster of a few years ago), and it's the company that recently got such good publicity by firing its experienced salespeople because they actually made lousy wages instead of truly miserable ones. I'm not sure having Circuit City on your side is a big plus right now.
- Weekend ad supplements are all over the place, but Blu-ray with its several brands does show up more often than HD DVD. I've seen Blu-ray players in Sears flyers (but not yet in Target flyers). I'm seeing prices just below \$500 for Blu-ray (including five flicks), which is still high for the holiday season. HD DVD's down to \$400, in some cases \$300 on sale.

- I *do* expect to see at least one Blu-ray player at \$400 or less before Christmas, but I could be wrong. I *don't* expect to see either format selling like hotcakes except disguised as game consoles. I do expect that five or six brands of Blu-ray players will outsell one brand of HD DVD, and it seems probable that Blu-ray discs will continue to outsell HD DVD discs.
- The "war" will continue in 2008 with no clear winner. Personally, I'd still bet on Blu-ray for fairly obvious reasons—but I have very little faith in that guess.
- If your users are asking for high-def and you have the money, I see no reason to hold off—assuming you can deal with puzzled patrons who find that the discs won't play on a regular DVD player. If your institution has a film studies course or department, you're probably already buying what few Blu-ray and HD DVD discs have been released. Otherwise, take your time: The high-def formats could both fail (although I consider total failure of both unlikely), and if they succeed it's going to take a while. Maybe next year...
- I don't buy the idea that physical media are going away. Anyone who just wants to see something once can *already* rent their DVDs (we certainly do)—but people buy a *lot* of DVDs, and I don't see why that would stop. The disc costs almost nothing to produce, you get extras that you can control on your own time and some of us suspect that pay-per-view will always winding up costing us more in the long run. Some people will prefer the "celestial jukebox." Some is not all—not by a long shot.

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## Masthead

*Cites & Insights: Crawford at Large*, Volume 7, Number 11, Whole Issue 95, ISSN 1534-0937, a journal of libraries, policy, technology and media, is written and produced by Walt Crawford, a senior analyst at OCLC (through September 30, 2007).



*Cites & Insights* is sponsored by YBP Library Services, <http://www.ybp.com>.

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