Don's Conference Notes

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The 13th Electronic Resources & Libraries Conference (ER&L)

Column Editor's Note: Because of space limitations, this is an abridged version of my report on this conference. You can read the full article which includes descriptions of additional sessions at ***http://www. against-the-grain.com/2018/06/13th-erl/.*** *— DTH*

The **Electronic Resources & Libraries (ER&L) Conference** returned once again to the AT&T Executive Conference Center in Austin, TX on March 4-7, 2018. It drew over 1,000 attendees from 17 countries, as well as about 500 online attendees. Besides the traditional mix of plenary and concurrent sessions, the conference featured an exhibit hall with over 80 exhibitors, a number of poster presentations, and pre- and post-conference workshops.

Sandy (L) and Bonnie Tijerina, Conference Coordinators

Opening Keynote
Content Standards and Their Consequences

Robyn Caplan, Researcher at **Data & Society Research Institute** (*https://datasociety.net/*), noted that the power of platforms lies in the central position that search engines occupy. However, distinctions between media companies and platforms have begun to blur, leading to ambiguity in our perceptions of how people are consuming information:

Robyn Caplan

- Platforms might be thought of as publishers, but large ones like Facebook, Twitter, and Google cannot define themselves well because it is difficult for them to categorize their content well.
- Are platform companies really media companies? **Mark Zuckerberg**, founder of Facebook, has said that Facebook defines itself as a technology company because media companies are largely known by the content they create.
- Are media companies platform companies? Some of them think of print as just another platform, and news media have shifted their strategies to be platforms.
- Barriers between distribution channels and publishers are converging. Platform operators are wondering what content they should be prioritizing, which are decisions publishers used to make.
- The Internet was intended to break down barriers between producers and readers and was initially advocated as the true public sphere. But it is unlikely that early Internet companies could foresee today's situation that there would be only a few companies dominating the Internet.

Caplan referred to a report recently published by her organization, which she co-authored: "Dead Reckoning: Navigating Content Moderation After "Fake News." Fake news can be detected by

- Intent: the author intends to spread false information,
- The type of information being conveyed, such as hoaxes, conspiracies, satire, etc., and
- Its features: unique words, visual cues, sensational images, and social patterns.

It is difficult to tell the difference between someone intending to inform and someone intending to deceive. Solutions to the fake news problem depend on:

- Trust and verification by third-party fact checkers,
- Demonetization of content not meeting standards,
- Banning accounts known to be producers of fake news and de-prioritizing their content, and
- Regulatory solutions (generally used outside the U.S.).

Platforms now rely more than ever on people to moderate and categorize content types.

Community Engagement: Using Linked Data to Increase Event and Collection Discoverability

According to **Ravi Singh**, Executive Director, **Demco Software** (*https://www.demco.com/software*), linked data creates visibility for libraries. He cited a recent **Pew Research** report, which reported that 80% of the adult respondents to a survey said that libraries should offer programs to teach people how to use digital tools such as 3-D printers, and 50% said that libraries should buy the tools. However, the same report also found that many Americans do not know that libraries offer learning-related programs.

Linked data opens up internal data to the web and encourages companies and others to publish it freely, but in libraries, linked data has been largely applied to books. Search engines use linked data to enrich their results, which can help libraries transform themselves from passive repositories into educational centers. **Demco's** product, Demco Discover, provides a suite of tools to help libraries use linked data effectively.

### How Do Students Do Research?

Molly Beisler, Discovery Services Librarian at the **University of Nevada-Reno**, presented a fascinating talk on her research into how students do their research. Instead of using the traditional method of having the searchers describe what they were doing, she had 222 students from eight classes draw diagrams. Images allowed expressions of ideas or feelings that might not emerge through words alone and also encourage abstract thinking. Some of her findings were:

1. 89% of the images showed research, and it was good to see that some students mentioned the library's databases.

2. Students are using the library's resources, and several of them mentioned the discovery system used at the library (Summon) by name.

3. Help was used at various points in searches, and it came from multiple sources — peers, family, and the writing center. The preferred source of help was peers; it was not frequently sought from the library.

Here are some of the drawings made by the students.
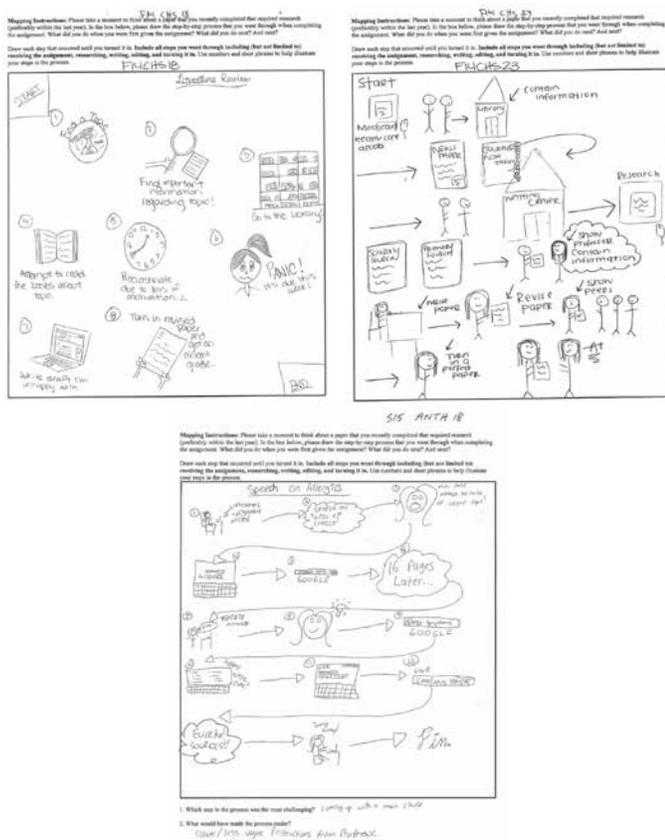
I Have Never Seen Anything Like This:
Student Interpretations of Metadata

Three researchers from the **University of Arizona** libraries reported on a study of 26 undergraduates in social and behavioral science programs which asked how students interpret metadata. The students were given some metadata terms from search results and asked to identify the subject of the articles, the producer, and whether the articles were relevant to the search topic. Here are some of the students' reactions:

- *"This looks like something I would not look at. I have never seen anything like this. If I saw this, I would go somewhere else."*
- *"This looks like a handbook. I'm not sure if that is just a smaller book?"*
- *"Is this a PDF, book, or article?"*
- *"I look at the title, then subject, then creators or publishers to see if it is a credible source."*

Metadata is clearly not what students are used to seeing in their search results, even though it is the interface between the user interface and information literacy.

Using Personas to Meet Users' Research
and Scholarship Needs

According to **Melissa Gustafson**, Electronic Resources Librarian, **Indiana State University**, personas were introduced in the library world in 2003. Qualitative personas are used in interviews, usability testing, focus groups, etc., and quantitative personas are used in surveys and data analysis.

Listening to Stories: Partnerships Between
Faculty, Publishers, and the Library

Lou Palmer and **Bekah Shaw** from **SAGE Research** noted that there is often a tension between faculty members and librarians, which is an obstacle to meeting library users' needs, despite the role of the faculty in selecting content (especially videos) for the library. **SAGE** wanted to facilitate conversations between publishers, faculty, and libraries, and librarians were receptive to getting feedback from the faculty. So a "Field Editor" positon was created to work with academic departments and determine the best way to help the library make decisions. The result was that **SAGE** received information from libraries that was useful for product development.

Best Practices for Licensing Online Video
Efficiently and Effectively

Erin DeWitt Miller and **Andrew Trantham** from the Media Library at the **University of North Texas (UNT)** noted that online video is fairly new, but it has become hard to imagine a world without it. Library users have come to expect it, and by 2020, it is estimated that online video on-demand viewing will be the equivalent of circulating 7.2 billion DVDs per month. As older media becomes obsolete, preservation aspects of online video become important, and libraries must be ready to support online courses using video.

At **UNT**, all legacy print licenses have been digitized and are stored on a departmental shared drive, so they are available to staff members and can be keyword searched. Here is some general advice regarding licenses:

- Clarity and specificity in the language are preferable.
- Maintain a clear understanding of your institution's legal requirements and a strong working relationship with the legal counsel.
- Establish clear documentation policies and procedures.
- If you have specific needs, don't be afraid to ask the vendor for them.
- Stay organized and track license expiration dates. Library users should be able to see all license terms.
- Plan for growth in budgeting and know your vendors.

As this slide shows, there are many steps involving significant time in acquiring online video after it is requested by a faculty member; it is important to recognize this in planning.
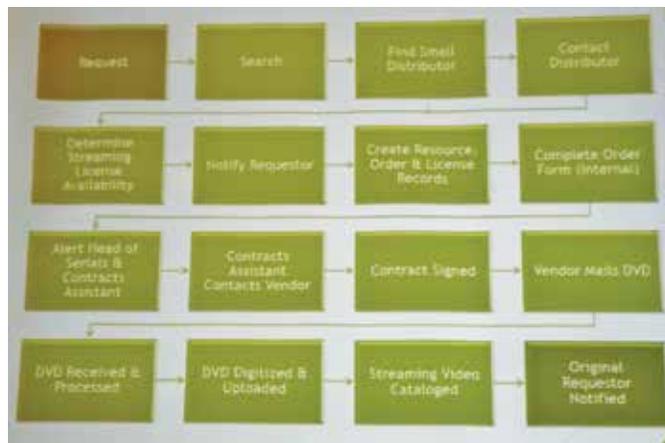
Digital Publishing: A Home for Faculty in the Library

Clare DeMarco and **Kyle Courtney** from the **Harvard Law School (HLS)** said that we are all doing digital scholarship, and have an opportunity to deepen the faculty-library relationship by showing the value that we can bring to the work of the faculty.

We must consider:

- What is the role of digital publishing in the library?
- Where can libraries look for support to remain competitive in the digital space?
- How can libraries support and develop faculty members who are creating digital scholarly content?

Librarians must continue to demonstrate their value to the faculty and leverage their strength as a community. We should not be afraid to call ourselves digital content creators.

The Importance of Discovery

Kari Paulson, VP of Market Development, and **Jed Reinitz**, Director of Product Management at **ProQuest**, discussed how prioritizing exploration of content promotes the value of the library. If we acquire and index content, will our users find it? We need to think about how we are doing at multiple levels of discovery because discovery and content are intertwined.

Discovery is the ability for users to find the content they are looking for, or in some cases, content they did not know that they needed. It is a shared goal that all stakeholders must work together to achieve. Priorities are different for everyone:

- Users: connecting to content.
- Publishers: increase the visibility of their brand and content.
- Aggregators: optimization over multiple content providers.
- Librarians: connect users to the library's content and demonstrate impact and usage of their resources.

The results of a study available from **Simon Inger Consulting** (now **Renew Publishing Consultants**, *http://renewpublishingconsultants.com/*) on how readers discover content in scholarly publications are encouraging because they show that many users still consider the library their most important resource. Twitter is now playing an increasingly important role.

Aggregators provide metadata enrichment, indexing across many suppliers, holdings updates, keeping everything in sync, and platform searching. We need to be reminded of their impact when we get discovery right or when problems arise.

By bringing bibliographic information closer to users' workflows, libraries can enable them to better evaluate available resources, create new pathways to serendipitous exploration, and provide a modern user experience. There are numerous pathways for discovery, and the user experience can be enriched with features available on other systems outside of the library, such as "more like this," "about the author," and "you may also like," all related to the library's resources.

Special Session: The Messy Reality of Algorithmic Culture

danah boyd, Founder and President, **Data & Society**; Principal Researcher at **Microsoft**; and Visiting Professor at **New York University**, began this special session by wondering what has happened to our algorithmic culture. She said that AI and Big Data seem to depend on the myth that if we just collect more data, we can solve the world's problems. We are not dealing with technology but an image of social problems. For example, we can now see into the

danah boyd

lives of people through social media platforms, so we must be able to deal with things more intelligently. The important point is not just the fact that we have the data, but how we make sense of it, which can be broken down into these four steps:

1. How did we get the data?
   - By choice: you know you want the data and get something in return, then share it.
   - By coercion (the opposite of choice). There is coercion at multiple levels; people in your network pull the data out of you.
   - By circumstance: you share something and hope something bad won't happen.
2. Seeing patterns, creating problems.
   - We make sense of what we are seeing by discrimination: the action of perceiving, noting, or making a distinction between things.

- How power comes into this is where the biggest problems lie. We may take our own discriminatory logic to the data, and how we use it can be an abuse of power.
- When do we use data? Do we make wrong assumptions? How do we deal with resulting recommendations?
3. Explicit corruption of data.
   - For example, brand names inserted into updates are more likely to be seen in a news feed.
   - White text on a white background is invisible and can be used to game a system.
   - Someone's name on Google can be used to make an unfavorable political point.
   - Hacking the attention economy has become fun for a lot of young people.
   - We are living in an ecosystem where data is being systematically manipulated for a variety of purposes.
4. Address values and cultural norms first.
   - Our responsibility is to ask the hard questions first, learn from the data, and help people. Part of the process of analyzing information is prediction of the future. (For example, airline pilots are expected to step in when something goes wrong; otherwise planes are flown on autopilot.)
   - Much of what we do could be smarter. We need to figure out what we want our tools to do. No technology is ever neutral.

Vendor Relations: Evolving Ethos and Etiquette

Laurel Sammonds Crawford, Head of Collection Development, and **Allyson Rodriguez**, Coordinator of Electronic Resources, **University of North Texas Libraries**, noted that today's environment is changing significantly: demand for electronic information is increasing; budgets are being restricted; content is becoming increasingly complex; and vendors are consolidating. Librarians need to decide what they want from their relationships with vendors. The most important thing is that the relationship is a business transaction, and the financial implications are always there.

Negotiations are necessary and can be burdensome. Inevitably, conflicts with vendors will arise. We must always be professional, but that should not prevent us from firmly advocating for the user. Timely and accurate invoicing is important, and we must evaluate resources and decide if it makes sense to purchase them for our organization. Following these principles will result in strengthened relationships, focused discussions, and the best use of time. You have a large responsibility to make sure your users are getting the best information for their needs.

Going Where Our Users Are: Enhancing Discovery and Access

Michael Levine-Clark, Dean and Director, **University of Denver Libraries**, and **Jason Chabak**, Director of Institutional Sales, **ReadCube** (*https://www.readcube.com/*), described a collaboration and pilot project to improve access to content for users. Users now expect instant access to everything; often, after several clicks, they discover for a variety of reasons that they do not have access to an article. For many users, the library is hard to use, so they do not start their searches with the library, but instead, go to sources like Sci-Hub.

The **University of Denver Libraries** began collaborating with **ReadCube**, which provides a seamless user interface and integrated access to PDF references from Google Scholar, PubMed, and other search engines. Users can read articles directly while browsing the web and create their own personal library. The main pain point for users is access to articles; inconsistent and frustrating experiences are driving users elsewhere.

ReadCube's vision is to provide access from anywhere that is easier than using rogue sites like Sci-Hub, so that users can easily get the content they need when they need it. So far, **ReadCube** has been focusing on increasing its coverage of scholarly subscription and open access journals.

Moving Beyond IP Authentication: The New Frontier in Single Sign-On

Andrew Nagy, Director of SaaS Innovation, **EBSCO**; **Robert Scaysbrook**, Head of Sales, OpenAthens; and **Dale Saenz**, Library Director, **Laredo Community College**, described how **EBSCO** has partnered with other companies to help libraries be as successful as possible. The typical end user journey is shown here:

But it can also be represented in terms of providers and their services:

There are many scenarios for accessing content; how can we streamline them and make it easy? Is there anything we can do to make it more of a managed service? Authentication is a significant problem in the user experience, so **EBSCO** has partnered with **OpenAthens** (*https://openathens.org/*) to create a fully integrated, librarian administered, single sign-on solution for libraries, even when the library is closed.

It is widely recognized that authentication based on IP address no longer works in today's distributed world because access is increasingly through mobile devices; personalization is expected; and changing license requirements are resulting in more to manage. Multiple technology services must be integrated, and usage of collections must be monitored.

OpenAthens is different from IP/proxy authentication because it was designed by librarians for librarians and works across all devices and locations. It is a cloud-based service that collects detailed usage statistics, supports user personalization, and uses a security protocol (Security Assertion Markup Language (SAML)) to pass information about users to service providers. Using the OpenAthens system, **EBSCO** built tools for access, searching, and training users, and aiding libraries in their support for higher education. Savings in costs and time are the result.

The Bookstore is for T-Shirts: Cooperatively Marketing the Library's eBooks as Textbooks

Maura Diamond, Director, Institutional Sales, **Springer Nature**; **Kelly Robinson**, Head, Collection Management, **Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University (ERAU)**; and **Krystie Wilfong**, Associate Librarian for Collection Management and Scholarly Communications, **Bates College**, addressed the widespread problem of high textbook costs for students. **Robinson** reported on a survey of 22,000 college students in Florida that concluded that the high cost of textbooks (averaging approximately $1,200/year) is negatively affecting students' success and course completion. About 2/3 of the survey respondents said they did not purchase a required textbook, and over half got a poor grade or failed a course as a result. Alternatives to textbooks include:

- Open Educational Resources (OERs) curated by the library,
- E-journals permitting fair use, and
- DRM-free eBook collections.

Willfong noted that **Bates College's** reserve policy has changed since 2013. Formerly, traditional textbooks were not included, but now the library has a policy that all required textbooks are put on reserve. They have arranged for the library bookstore to proactively promote reserved books to students. Although the average use per item is ten copies, some books have been accessed over 200 times. And sales of those books by the bookstore have significantly decreased. The faculty is in favor of these efforts because all students have an edition of the required books.

Maura Diamond said that over 6,900 librarians and professors have expressed interest in **Springer Nature's** "Affordable Textbook" campaign, in which they used the library's records to identify which books were being used in courses at **Hope Colleges**. Editorial Board members of book series are working with **Springer Nature** to develop materials that they can use to market licensed eBooks in their departments. After the appropriate books were identified, a toolkit was created for librarians to use to find which textbooks are available and create awareness with students.

Closing Keynote
Antisocial Media: How Facebook Disconnects People and Undermines Democracy

Siva Vaidhyanathan, Professor of Media Studies at the **University of Virginia**, closed the conference with a revealing look at Facebook and how it controls many aspects of its users' lives. Much of his address was taken from his forthcoming book *Antisocial Media*, which will be published in September 2018. He began by marveling that Facebook now has over 2.2 billion users, and this number is rapidly growing, especially in Myanmar, Brazil, and India. Facebook's engineers must therefore deal with a vast universe dispersed around the globe — it has become a system too big to govern.

Vaidhyanathan's main premise is that if you wanted to invent a propaganda system to promote nationalism and authoritarianism, you could not invent one better than

Siva Vaidhyanathan

Facebook. It scrambles our social, economic, and political contexts. All of its users are in the same social milieu, which is not the way we live; we manage our lives and reputations according to the relationships where we are at the moment. In contrast, Facebook wants us to interact with as many people as possible in the same way because that is in their interests; its developers believe that the more people we share things with, the better our lives will be. We are unable to have collective calm deliberations about anything important because our news feeds are constantly interrupting us and capturing our attention. **Vaidhyanathan** said that is a disaster when it is expanded to a universe of 2.2 billion people.

Facebook has a huge breadth of influence in the world. It scrambles our relationships in three major areas:

1. *Personal*. Facebook accelerates the distribution of content that is likely to generate clicks, links, and shares (for example, cute puppy, cat, and baby pictures). This type of material appeals to our emotions, even negative ones, such as condemnation of hate speech, and generates many strong comments on both sides of an issue.

2. *Commercial*. Every marginal dollar spent on advertising in the last two years is spent on Facebook. Advertising used to be a faith-based practice; there is no way to accurately measure the impact of a print ad, but now with Facebook's system, it is easy to target ads to a precisely defined audience, measure their effect, and alter them as necessary in real time. Marketing budgets are therefore spent much more effectively; it is not uncommon to run an ad on Facebook that cost in the hundreds of dollars but results in thousands of dollars in sales.

3. *Political*. Facebook's internal investigation of Russian political ads in the 2016 election showed that they undermined faith in the U.S. democracy. Other examples are well known: **Donald Trump's** campaign officials said that he won the election because of Facebook's ad targeting; **Narendra Modi**, the current Prime Minister of India, runs all of his political campaigns on Facebook and uses it to threaten

dissenters; and corrupt elections in various countries have been traced to Facebook ads. There is no oversight, transparency, or opportunity to respond to such actions.

Vaidhyanathan's conclusion is that the reason Facebook's mission went wrong is that its leaders believed that good intentions were enough, and that blind faith in technology could generate a better world.

For a very general overview of the conference, see "Top 10 Trends at the **2018 ER&L Conference**," *https://hub.wiley.com/community/exchanges/discover/blog/2018/03/18/top-10-trends-at-the-2018-electronic-resources-libraries-erl-conference*. The **2019 ER&L Conference** will return to Austin on March 3-6. 🐾

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*Donald T. Hawkins is an information industry freelance writer based in Pennsylvania. In addition to blogging and writing about conferences for **Against the Grain**, he blogs the **Computers in Libraries** and **Internet Librarian** conferences for **Information Today, Inc. (ITI)** and maintains the **Conference Calendar** on the **ITI** Website (**http://www.infotoday.com/calendar.asp**). He is the Editor of **Personal Archiving: Preserving Our Digital Heritage**, (Information Today, 2013) and Co-Editor of **Public Knowledge: Access and Benefits** (Information Today, 2016). He holds a Ph.D. degree from the **University of California, Berkeley** and has worked in the online information industry for over 45 years.*