SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATION 1971 TO 2013. A BRINDLEY SNAPSHOT.

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Abstract

This chapter attempts a snapshot of the dramatic changes impacting on scholarly information access and delivery in the last forty years through the prism of Lynne Brindley's career. This was a period in which historical practices of information and access delivery have been dramatically overturned. In some respects, however, the models of scholarly publishing practice and economics have not changed significantly, arguably because of the dominance of multinational publishers in scholarly publishing, exemplified in the 'Big Deals' with libraries and consortia, and the scholarly conservatism imposed to date by research evaluation exercises and tenure and promotion practices.

The recent global debates on open access to publicly funded knowledge, have, however, brought scholarly communication to the forefront of attention of governments and university administrations .The potential exists for scholarly research to be more widely available within new digital economic models, but only if the academic community regains ownership of the knowledge its creates. Librarians can and should play a leading role in shaping 'knowledge creation, knowledge ordering and dissemination, and knowledge interaction'.

It is a truth universally acknowledged that in the twenty first century, we are witnessing a revolution in communication, both scholarly and social, unparalleled since the invention of the printing press in the fifteen century. Instantaneous internet communication provides unprecedented opportunities and

challenges for scholarly communication, libraries, information access and delivery.

Lynne Brindley's career spans that significant period of change. In her Miles Conrad Lecture for 2009, Lynne commented, 'Certainly I have been a participant in the digital library journey, perhaps for more years than I care to recollect and the challenges of libraries and information technologies, information and knowledge management have certainly shaped major parts of my career'. Brindley (2009a).

Oxford 1971-2013

I first met Lynne when she was a SCONUL trainee at the Bodleian Library in 1971-2. In April 2002, I was privileged to give the after dinner speech at the 400th anniversary of the re-founding of the Bodleian Library. In my speech, I alluded to Lynne's time as a trainee at the Bodleian and noted that coming from Australia, a quote from *South Pacific* was appropriate: 'We get packages from home / We get movies, we get shows', but 'There is nothin' like a dame'. This prediction of a Dameship came true in 2008. Lynne's election as Master of Pembroke College Oxford from August 2013 brings, as Lynne put it, 'A degree of Oxford circularity'.

1971 now seems almost a library galaxy far far away, when some of the Bodleian traditions, particularly in cataloguing, still had their practices in a previous century.There was a Bodleian automation activity, however, in the late 1960s, which in ambition, if not in completion, foreshadowed Lynne's work at Aston University in the second half of the 1980's in campus networked automation.

Automation

The Bodleian embarked in the late 1960's on what can be seen in retrospect as an overly optimistic OCR scanning project. This

was to convert the pre-1920 Bodleian manuscript catalogue entries, in various languages and hands. The project leaders, in turn, Peter Brown and John Jolliffe, had both come from the British Museum Library, a library which Lynne was later to head when in its new location at St Pancras. The complexities in scanning the manuscript entries proved too much for the contracted firm, which went out of business. This automation endeavour may have provided an invaluable case study in terms of communication, project planning and management for Lynne when at KPMG in the early 1990's.

Research libraries and scholarly communication

The Bodleian, with its historical tradition of 'scholar librarians', reflected that the work of university libraries must be inextricably linked with those of their scholarly communities. The 1970's Bodleian focus was essentially academic, and occasionally esoteric (*Scottish Herringbone Bindings before 1640* was the subject of one Bodleian librarian's thesis).

Research libraries are now, in contrast, in 'an era of discontinuous change—a time when the cumulated assets of the past do not guarantee future success'. Calhoun (2012). Research libraries must reconfigure their priorities to participate in and influence emergent, network-level scholarly communication infrastructures. The digitally connected world has seen scholarly communication evolve in new campus relationships for the library in such areas as e-scholarship, data management, copyright, on-line learning, scholarly publishing, institutional repositories and research metrics and analysis.

The use of impact in the wider societal sense for scholarly output in the UK 2014 Research Evaluation Framework also brings into play new relationships on campus between libraries and their scholarly campus community. Data collection required here goes far beyond traditional citation metrics. An Australian 2012 study, *Excellence in Innovation. Research Impacting Our*

Nation's Future, highlighted the importance of grey literature in supporting the case studies on impact assessment. In this role, libraries play an essential collecting and repository function. Group of Eight Australian Technology Network (2012).

Follett Committee 1992 and the 'electronic library'

Lynne, as the new Librarian of the London School of Economics in 1992 became a member of the Follett Committee, established that year to review library provision in higher education. The 1993 Follett report supported the need for, in general terms, the electronic delivery of documents over networks; the electronic availability of teaching materials for students; the opportunities for resource sharing and practical co-operation; and an integrated approach to information access and delivery in a complex environment.

By early 1994, the Funding Councils had approved the establishment of the Follett Implementation Group on Information Technology (FIGIT). This committee, chaired by Lynne, developed a major three-year UK electronic library initiative. As Reg Carr commented later, 'a sense of excitement, and of facilitated change, was in the air, and the level of expectation within the academic library and information community was very high'. Carr (2002).

The 'Big Deal'

Part of this initiative included 'Big Deal' contracts with multinational STM publishers. At the time, these national agreements, which were replicated in several countries, including Australia, captured that excitement in providing a platform for delivery of increased content to libraries and then increasingly, to the desktops of researchers.

As time has elapsed, that excitement has often turned to frustration by librarians over the inflexibility and cost of 'Big Deal'contracts. Although the scholarly world is globally linked, much of the scholarly information created by university researchers,still remains behind the expensive firewalls of multinational publishers. The debate, currently raging on open access to publicly funded research, is reflected in the debate on the 'Big Deal'.

A study of a decade of 'Big Deal' library purchasing in American research libraries, notes that, 'Interest in research library subscriptions to large-publisher bundles persists for several reasons. Perhaps the primary reason is that, for more than a decade, a small group of publishers account for a disproportionate amount of libraries' materials expenditures . . . Content and pricing seem to be trending toward a growing disconnect'. (Strieb and Blixrud, 2013, p.1,8). Stuart Schieber, Director of the Office for Scholarly Communication at Harvard University, has outlined the difficulties that even a Harvard school has had in reducing the cost of the Elsevier 'Big Deal', even when they wanted to cancel a significant number of serials. 'From the library's point of view, you can't win by cancelling journals, because the product is not the journal, it's the bundle'. Schieber (2013).

The current financial problems of American university libraries resulting from funding cutbacks and the decline of the American dollar, is a scholarly blessing in disguise, because it leads universities, like Harvard and California, to question the nature of scholarly publishing monopolies and the nature of academic publishing practices in the twenty-first century.

Andrew Odzlyko in his wide ranging article 'Open Access, library and publisher competition, and the evolution of general commerce', notes that publishers have proved more adept in the control of scholarly publishing in recent decades and 'In the process they are also marginalizing libraries, and obtaining a

greater share of the resources going into scholarly communication. This is enabling a continuation of publisher profits as well as of what for decades has been called "unsustainable journal price escalation".' Odzlyko (2013).

The UK Finch Report 2012

One of the inhibiting factors to scholarly communication change is the inability of much of the academic community to comprehend the new digital publishing environments and an inability to resist the conservative 'publish or perish' frameworks, in which they are trapped by their university administrations, national research evaluation exercises and university league tables. Nowhere is this better reflected than in the academic reactions to the British 2012 Finch Report on *Accessibility, Sustainability, Excellence: how to expand access to research publications*. Finch (2012).

Lynne Brindley, in her opening address, to a November 2012 'Implementing Finch' Conference, reflected that 'To be provocative, one might argue that there is more trust between a researcher and her publisher than between a researcher and her university acting as gatekeeper of the publication fund, particularly as it is not obvious where all the necessary funds will come from?' Brindley (2012).

The Finch Committee report stimulated significant global commentary, largely stemming from its overall preference on favouring 'Gold' Open Access article payments as the best way to implement open access to publicly funded research.

The Finch Committee, and especially the RCUK (Research Councils UK), have been criticised for not thinking through the economic and structural issues of implementing this approach, particularly for the HASS (Humanities and Social Sciences) disciplines and for not exploring in depth other models. It has, however, had the dramatic effect of bringing to the attention of

university administrations the issues, and particularly the economics, of scholarly communication and publishing.

One of the alleged parameters for the Finch Committee was not to 'disturb' the existing scholarly publishing framework, although it is curious why it should be protected, when many other communication industries are being significantly disrupted and transformed in a digital global environment. The dominance of the multinational publishers has only taken place in the last forty or so years, so there is no historical precedent for contemporary protection. A long term retrospective review would have been helpful for the Finch Committee, not least in examining the original institutional models of the ownership of university scholarship.

The British Library under Lynne Brindley has engaged in significant prospective analyses of digital futures and 'digital natives'. This author attempted some futurology in 1995, when invited to give the Follett Lectures in that year, 'New Romances or Pulp Fiction? Do Libraries and Librarians have an Internet Future?'. In 2013, quite a lot of my 'neuromancer' type predictions have proven reasonably accurate, such as in the paragraphs:

'The network advances have transformed our modes of communication and will result in significant changes in our structures to accommodate organised information access and storage. The world is indeed now increasingly McLuhan's global village. The origin and dissemination of knowledge can just as easily be in Australia, Austria or Albania as America . . . The integration of scholarly communication processes from the creation of the article/book with the author, through to the ultimate delivery mechanism, is now requiring a new convergence and interaction of author, publisher, distributor and reader. Publishers' print warehouse will be transformed, where relevant to a continuing publisher presence, into electronic delivery mechanisms with data being sent electronically directly to users or to libraries for site wide access and downloading accompanied by secure encrypted monetary transfers'. Steele (1995a).

University presses and the monograph

I also commented in those lectures,

'University presses, a declining force in recent years, may well become transformed as they mutate into distributors of information from their own and other universities in electronic format, thereby making available information that was too prohibitively expensive to produce and distribute in conventional form.' Steele (1995b).

The Finch Committee did not address in any detail the question of the future of the academic monograph, This topic, at the time of writing, is the subject of an Australian Government expert reference group, comprising librarians, publishers and academics. It has been given the brief to explore the future of the academic monograph in a digital context and to try to establish sustainable infrastructures for publication, particularly in open access formats.

The success of some of the newly established Australian University Presses, such as the ANU E Press, founded in 2003, might provide one of the exemplars for open access monograph production. In 2012 the ANU E Press, embedded in the academic institutional framework of the university had nearly 700,000 complete monograph PDF downloads. If this is compared to the average print sale of an academic monograph, estimated in several surveys to be around 200-300 copies, the comparison is significant. In the Australian model, the online version is freely available for download but print copies are available for purchase through POD (print on demand). In 2012 ANU sold nearly 7,000 print copies. The ANU model of making available its own institutional scholarship through its university press reverts back to the model established, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century by a number of universities, including Johns Hopkins, Manchester and the University of California.

Conclusion

The leadership of Lynne Brindley at the British Library since 2000 has encompassed digital developments on all content fronts with significant outreach to communities locally, nationally and globally. Lynne has especially been a fervent champion of digital scholarship in the corridors of power, as represented by her membership of a number of influential committees in the UK.

Librarians, whom one Australian Vice Chancellor once referred to as 'mice who aspire to be rats', need to be much more 'rat-like' as numerous external global influences impact on their operations. In this process, high level scholarly communication expertise is essential. In 2013, the globally networked university library has to position itself to engage actively with research, learning and civic engagement. It needs to be cognisant of the rapidly changing digital and social media conditions and consequent priorities in teaching and research of online environments.

Access to and delivery of knowledge cannot remain in the digital 21st-century within the constrained frameworks imposed by the historical print and reward environments. Scholars will need to be increasingly involved in an integrated scholarly research output environment which will begin the creation of scholarship and end with its widespread distribution. The overall critical factors, in terms of access and distribution of knowledge, will be an emphasis on openness and social productivity.

Cliff Lynch, Director of the US Coalition for Networked Information since 1997, has reflected, in a long interview, on the massive changes that have occurred for libraries over the last thirty years. Lynch reflects that we are, 'Now in an era when giant, badly behaved Telecom incumbents dominate'. Lynch (2012). This comment resonates with those of Timothy Wu in *The Master Switch: The Rise and Fall of Information Empires,* where Wu notes the dominance of Apple, Google, Amazon and

Microsoft, all of whose activities have dramatically impinged on libraries and information providers.

Wu demonstrates how new communication mediums arrive on a wave of optimism, (like the 'Big Deal'?), only to become dominated by monopolies who take control of the 'Master Switch'. Wu (2010). Wu argues that the Internet is in danger of following the same path as telegraphy and telephony in the nineteenth century, and film, radio and television in the twentieth. A similar argument is propounded in Susan Crawford's *Captive Audience. The Telecom Industry and Monopoly Power in the New Gilded Age*. Crawford (2013) Crawford's focus is about the control over, and dissemination of, telecommunication infrastructure in the United States.

New readers in the Bodleian take an oath which include the words: 'I hereby undertake not to . . . kindle therein any fire'. Will the ever increasing tablets and mobile devices be the mechanisms to kindle the flames of wider access to publicly funded knowledge in the twenty first century, or will multinational publishers continue their control and pricing dominance of much scholarly content within the conservatism of current scholarly reward practices. As Gideon Burton has written, 'the more academia wishes to enjoy the benefits of the digital medium, the less it can hold on to restrictive and closed practices in the production, vetting, dissemination, and archiving of information. Burton (2009).

The vision of the future of scholarly communication within those frameworks could be viewed as either utopian or dystopian depending one's perspective. A strong voice and leadership by librarians is needed more than ever and here it is appropriate that Lynne Brindley should have the last word: 'Opportunities exist for real and vocal leadership in shaping this emerging space, shaping the political economy of higher education, and shaping its interactions with knowledge creation,

knowledge ordering and dissemination, and knowledge interaction'. Brindley (2009b).

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