

## ALA 2005 CONFERENCE Report

This was my first visit to the conference other than visiting the exhibits. I was overwhelmed by the number of programs being offered and the variety of topics covered.

I briefly attended the Association for Library Collections & Technical Services program *Licensing of E-Resources: A Refresher Workshop*. Most of the session was appropriately devoted to copyright and fair use. A model license was described and I learned about key clauses to watch for in negotiating a contract.

Especially interesting was Friday's *OCLC Symposium-Mining the Long Tail: Libraries, Amazon and Infinite Availability*. The program was highlighted by *Wired* magazine's Chris Anderson who described what the future holds for the entertainment industry and how it might relate to libraries. The old model was based on marketing to the broadest possible segment within the confines of the physical world. Only urban areas could generate sufficient demand to allow for example, a CD store to offer an offbeat group or genre. Consumers in smaller cities and rural areas were out of luck. New ventures such as Rhapsody depend on an ever growing demand for the "non-hits", lesser-known or foreign groups, specialty genres etc. These segments account for 33% of their profits. We are transitioning from a "one-size fits all" market to a niche driven one. The primary reason for this is of course, the internet and the dissolution of physical distribution. This vast area of lesser-known and obscure materials is known as the "long tail". Libraries are of course, full of books, serials, and recordings in the "tail". With increased public awareness of and web access to these materials, libraries can expect and statistics show, an increase in interlibrary loan. Additionally, with resources such as Amazon and its consortia of o.p. booksellers, the phrase "out of print" will become "out of date".

Another feature of the new market is Amazon's "people who choose 'x' also liked 'y' feature. Faced with too many choices one can have in a digital world, people tend to buy less and are more likely to be unhappy with the purchase. On Amazon you can sort products by top sellers, reviewed, etc. Such software might be of use in a library as a means of directing patrons who avoid the librarian, to additional material that might be of use to them.

The second speaker was John Blossom of Shore Communications. His library specific recommendations were to concentrate on context utilization rather than growing large collections. Content wants to be found where it is most valued. Priority in digitization should be given to objects that are unique.

Mention was also made that libraries should take on the role of the academic press by not only preserving but digitally publishing in-house scholarship. This would result in substantial more research being available to a much larger audience.

The session *Going Digital: Experiences from East Asia and the Pacific* offered 7 presentations on primarily national efforts to create information networks. These varied

widely in scope and content. Interestingly, the Taiwan service was intended to promote commercial activity as much as create a national information database. Singapore is developing “shopping mall” libraries which require no librarians and are entirely fee-based.

The *Google’s Library: What’s in Store for Google Print and Google Scholar* event was expectedly well-attended. The representative from Google gave a broad outline of what their project intends to provide and how they were going about creating it. Members of the 5 participating research institutions were on hand to explain why and to what extent they are involved with the project. The tone of the many questions from the audience made it clear that the usefulness and potential benefits of the project are still in doubt among many libraries.

Finally, I also attended the Theatre Library Association’s presentation on the Ann Barzel Dance Collection at the Newberry and Chicago Public Libraries.

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