

Interlend 2011

Delivering the Future: Looking Back and Looking Forward

27th to 28th June 2011

On the 27th June I made my way to Durham to attend the Interlend 2011 Conference in Durham. After a reasonable journey I arrived in time for a well received pre-conference cup of tea at the impressive Durham Marriott Hotel. I was eager to hear from a number of speakers and had noted sessions of particular interest to my own institution that I hoped to attend.

After an introduction by Graham Titley the day kicked off with Mike McGrath who talked about the 'developments in ILL and related areas'. He spoke of the 'time of change' that we are in and demonstrated this with his personal history in Document Supply and the technological changes that occurred. Mike made some very interesting comments that related to problematic 'Big Deals' journal usage with a striking example that only 50% of titles at Cambridge University accounted for around 97% of usage. This meant that the other 50% only accounted for 3% usage. With a bit of working out the use of Document Supply has the potential to decrease the amount spent on acquisitions when used effectively. He described the world of Document Supply as a 'dysfunctional market' which embraces competition with users who are not the purchasers. I felt the most important aspect of his talk covered the worry of the increasingly limiting world of copyright. Murmurs of reiterated discontent could be heard as he described how contracts are beginning to overwrite copyright law which in turn lead to copyright law moving in favour of publishers. He described the original purpose of copyright law as encouraging 'learned men to compose and write useful books'. Mike's concern is that the publishers own these rights and that they argue that copyright must be assigned due to costs. He felt that this was cheeky as most work comes at no cost to the publisher. He suggests that we all read chapter 5 of the Hargreaves report for key issues of contention in the current copyright climate. Of particular interest was the suggestion that a provision should be made to enable data mining, that over regulation of copyright should be resisted and that the law should be clear in stating that it cannot be overwritten by contract. Ultimately he agreed with the statement that the central objective of copyright is to allow the 'provision of incentives to creators'.

Mike went on to talk about the role of the library in providing an information 'gateway' noting that:

'It is almost impossible to overstate the importance of these request management systems'

He made a good point about checking if articles have been archived in an open access format before requesting and went on to talk about his predictions for the future. These included his belief that pay per view prices are unlikely to come down, that the 'Big Deal' would become increasingly problematic and that ILL would become faster and cheaper. He reiterated the importance of 'managing the gateway' which was to be mentioned a few times throughout the conference and also noted that he felt the BL should remain the central hub for ILL. I wondered if everyone felt the same.

Mike was followed with a challenge by Caren Milloy, Head of Projects with JISC Collections who discussed the current trend towards the purchase of eBooks and the perceived difficulties that these create (at least for interlenders). The eBook landscape was quite appropriately likened to a Pollock painting: 'it has no clear landscape'. She demonstrated the rise in their popularity and described the user end educational use of these sources as being dipped in and out of. Tellingly she quoted Clay Shirky (who I know nothing about) as saying that:

"Institutions will try to preserve the problem to which they are the solution."

We were told to instead embrace this inevitable future and it was suggested that we move beyond the limiting walls of criticism and acknowledge the benefits that eBooks offered. We should look to the porn industry for inspiration as an example of moving forward by 'hyperpersonalising' its service. By acknowledging the move from print to online consumption and embracing the 'me economy' the porn industry was able to enjoy economic success through tailoring its services to the wants of their users. This rings very true and is symptomatic of the highly convenient expectations of the 'Google' student. The big 'but' of this presentation was that there is still a preference for print and that print is still heavily used. Caren wonders if this is because the experience is not as engaging as it should be. I enjoyed her talk and felt she covered their place in the library landscape well but would have liked her to cover eBooks within a Document Supply Framework as their format is something that is becoming an increasingly frustrating barrier to interlending.

Graham Titley stood eager to note the problems that they do cause such as the immediate availability of current issues and the limits that copyright places on the Document Supply world for such items. He also argued that publishers do not buy into the business of a personalised approach to which Caren quite interestingly responded that actually they do but that they want to sell to students not libraries. She said

that DRM is restrictive but we should note that we are moving away from the idea of 'book'. Content is personalised and can consist of interactive content.

Graham remained unimpressed with eBooks in their current format; their content is locked down, that they are electronically out of date and that they risk titles becoming out of circulation. He felt that the BL has a crucial role to play in dealing with contracts. We were left with the question:

'How can we be more interactive as opposed to dictatorial?'

Nods of agreement around the room suggest there is certainly a lot of room for discussion in this area.

Having determined beforehand with my institutional colleagues which sessions to attend I sat in on both the Worldcat resource sharing session and Graham Titleys' e-signatures. I was very impressed with the e-signature session. My current employer is looking at implementing this so it was useful to walk away with a detailed handout of the legal and practical requirements that need to be in place to make such a progression work. Graham was both knowledgeable and captivating and it was uplifting to hear someone so keen on sharing their experiences. Interesting points were noted regarding the reality of consequence within UK law in reference to copyright. This shouldn't be taken as an excuse to ignore copyright but was certainly a valid point considering the quite often large steps taken in order to adhere to such rules. If you belong to an institution that is looking at taking this route it is certainly worth looking at the handout provided. It is available on the FIL website as are the slides for all other sessions.

The worldcat session made a few interesting points but I can't say there were any real sparks for me although I do believe that this could be of real value to OCLC members. I did get the feeling that I was being advertised at which was fine but I couldn't see anything particularly valuable with its operation for my own team. Key features that were of interest included the directing of inter-library requests to the most suitable supplier. I was impressed by its professed ability that directed suppliers to the items required immediately towards their licensing information. This seemed pretty useful but it wasn't clear how much work would be involved in setting this up.

Debbie Boden finished off for the day with her talk 'Digital Literacies'. This began with a question about the true literacy of the 'Google Generation'. Stating that western commerce and social interaction is largely dependent on the net and that the level of digital access is reflective of the respective economy she questioned at what point we could profess to be digitally literate. She noted that the CILIP definition of this literacy was not clear. With a clip of Terry Wogan teaching 'Digital Life Skills' Debbie noted the concern that: 'without these skills we run the risk of being excluded and disenfranchised from everyday life'.

The importance of sharing HE sector skills with the public sector was discussed as was making future generations clear about the consequences of the type of digital footprints that they leave. Debbie went on to discuss the future for a 'Blended Librarian' who 'should push more out in a digital way'. This ideal candidate would possess technological skills that would include good hardware and software skills. Slightly worrying for anyone thinking of taking this path should note that this ideal C.V would consist of around four degrees including teaching, 3 years as a librarian and two years in IT, no small achievement at any level.

The evening dinner was lovely and proved an opportunity to chat to colleagues whose names I knew from e-mail correspondence alone.

After a lovely breakfast we sat keen and ready to hear a captivating talk by Jan Hagerlid of the National Library of Sweden regarding the state of open access in his home country. The policy backed encouragement by his government to push forward an environment of open access was truly inspirational and should certainly be noted by our own policy makers. He told us that the EU is currently initiating discussion whilst pushing member states with a plan to extend open access requirements and noted that despite being hard to measure there is currently an annual growth of around 80% in the number of journals available through open access. Jan talked about the wider picture of Open Access noting that it is not just articles that are of interest but also scholarly and scientific monographs, educational resources, recorded sound, metadata, digitized materials and data that is not only openly accessible but also available for re-use. This last item is particularly important as this allows for increased scientific and technological development. The National Library of Sweden (NLS) was responsible for organizing a national consortium for licences of e-resources as well organising a program of co-ordination of publishing. Interestingly he told us that this did not involve huge sums of money but rather relied on the fostering of a spirit of collaboration (something certain exclusive universities should perhaps take note of). Despite some opposition the Swedish Research Council took a helpful decision to have an open access mandate which was to set a precedent for further institutions to follow. The NLS adopted an open access policy in 2010 with policy areas that included; the use of creative commons, digitizing works that are no longer in copyright and a plan to have a repository in the

frame of University Libraries. Anyone with an interest in Open Access would do well to look at the Swedish Model as this was a very motivating example. Graham made a few points, notably about the current 'culture of administrative efficiency against efficiency towards users' holding the UK back to which there was some head nodding.

I've been hoping to hear more about Clio UK for a while now so I sat on the session hosted by Jennifer Perkins, System Developer and was immediately impressed by the system that was discussed. Caroline from Swansea mentioned that they were in the process of purchasing this and seemed very keen. Anthony Troman of the British Library also attended and it was reassuringly clear that there was a good line of communication between the two institutions for the purpose of service. The Clio UK system was created by her parents in response to her frustration at the time consuming administrative process of the Document Supply department in which she worked. The fact that the system was created alongside the very staff that were to use it means that it is completely practical and efficient on even the most basic levels. I was so impressed I immediately ran out and asked my manager to please put forward an argument to purchase this system. I felt that with this system in place alongside the implementation of e-signatures my own institution could potentially save up to three hours of administrative work daily. This is something that cost cutting institutions could certainly do to look at.

The second breakaway session I chose to attend was titled Sourcing References in Alternative Formats and was presented by Alistair McNaught, Senior Technical Advisor, JISC TechDis. This was conducted in a broadcast format and looked at the new possibilities of meeting users needs. There are various reasons why users struggle with resources. Alistair described the library as the 'owner of the magic slipper' by providing access to a broad range of formats. It was nice to see the positive aspects of e-learning demonstrated with the ability to change the font size and colour of a textbook. Auto scroll was noted as a benefit for some readers as was the ability to reflow (or fit screen). Textbooks that speak their content are a great advantage for both dyslexic and vision impaired students. Auto skim reading by keyword was another great advantage and it was at this point that my previous distaste for eBooks waned slightly when I realised the level at which they opened education up to a wider audience. Alistair spoke about a number of access apps that provide accessibility features such as text to speak and colour tinting software tools. He mentioned eduapps.org noting the 'mystudybar suite' and suggested that it was our responsibility to ensure our accessibility departments were all aware of these. We were told that our role as information professionals is to signpost these fields by requirement. A number of very handy JISC TechDis pamphlets were given out. I would suggest that anyone who has an interest in this visit the website <http://www.jisctechdis.ac.uk/> for more information.

Over a buffet lunch I was able to catch up with a number of colleagues from around the country who were eager to share experiences such as the purchasing of titles from Amazon if they are cheaper than a loan (which is not hard). After a lovely Pavlova I wandered upstairs to hear Anthony Tromans talk.

This would be the second time I would hear Anthony Troman demonstrate the new Integrated Request management system of the British Library and I came away feeling much the same as I did the first time. Positive updates included a simpler in-tray, that we could have in plain English if required and that requests could be cancelled immediately if sent by mistake. The method of requesting on a manual basis was improved greatly although I couldn't see any huge benefits for my own daily work as this isn't the route we take. We do however deal with course pack requests and the ability to create satellite accounts that don't require a library operating system for these departments seems a potential bonus for my colleague if we were to take this route. You can choose to allow these satellite accounts to come via your central account if you are concerned about such a freedom. Ultimately I felt that this system was brilliant for researchers who conduct their own requesting directly with the British Library. I couldn't see huge advantages for our sector but I am sure others with alternative operating systems disagree. I look forward to its implementation and the comments that follow.

We then had a talk by Stephanie Taylor of Critical Eye Communications Limited telling us to shout about our services if we wanted to keep them. These were important points in an age of funding cuts and should be remembered. This was not a talk to teach new skills nor learn new things but rather re-iterated the importance of pushing ourselves into sight in order to maintain our services. This was followed by the plenary session before which a large proportion of the room headed off for their trains.

Although there were important points raised alongside an opportunity for discussion it was quite clear that most attendees were considering long journeys home and it was a shame that more wasn't contributed by delegates during this session. This couldn't be blamed on anyone as this was the beginning of the end of a session packed conference. The only recommendation I could think of was perhaps to conduct this session with a cup of tea or coffee in hand as this might have perked a few weary but willing heads up just that bit extra. A topic of notable interest that was raised regarded the recent controversial statement by STM setting out their guiding principles for Document Delivery. It was

decided that FIL should prepare a statement in response and was a positive reminder of why institutions such as FIL are important for the development of the sector in which we belong.