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Electronic Scholarly Publication
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Introduction

THIS ISSUE of *Transforming Libraries* covers the broad topic of electronic scholarly publication and subsequent volumes of this series may address specific issues examined here. Electronic scholarly publication is currently in a turbulent period, and though some in the field see prospects for stabilization and standardization, many professionals suggest that the complexity will simply grow.

Some 25 professionals in 20 libraries, consortia, and publishing enterprises were interviewed for this issue. One person characterized the field as still in the "training wheels" stage; another suggested a gradual evolution from parallel play (pre-schoolers) to more mature relationships and behaviors. And though the field is perceived as currently having its challenging aspects, most professionals interviewed find it exciting and energizing. Another source quoted a faculty member who asserted that electronic availability of scholarly resources had enabled him, a heavy library user, not to visit an actual library for three years.

Changing Landscape

All agree that change is happening at a faster rate than either libraries or library suppliers have been accustomed to. Few doubt the benefits of the advancing technology and the lowering of certain costs, which bring a wealth of scholarly resources to an ever-widening potential audience, including community colleges, public libraries, and even high schools.

One dizzying aspect of electronic scholarly publication is the many roles that principals can adopt in its provision.

Libraries are consumers of electronic publication, of course, but they can also be content creators, publishers, mirror sites for publishers, and publisher partners. Vendors can be publishers (either commercial or nonprofit), aggregators of publishers' products, or both. They sell to anyone who can buy, only to consortia, or only to individual institutions. One person suggested that this mixing of traditional roles and modes of distribution has had its counterproductive side—everyone is trying to do someone else's job. Libraries are becoming publishers, publishers are becoming jobbers, and so on. Others see this "confusion" as temporary; they predict the future will see a return to the traditional roles and models that we have valued during the predominantly print culture.

Reports Form the Field

Information professionals in several libraries and consortia were interviewed for this issue. The "Reports from the Field" section showcases a number of institutions and organizations, including:

- Blackwell
- Boston College Library
- University of California
- Columbia University
- Elsevier
- Emory University
- Johns Hopkins University Library and Press
- JSTOR
- University of Michigan
- OCLC
- Ohio State University Libraries
- Virginia Tech

Also showcased are issues and trends for managers, which examines such issues as:

- proliferation of roles and models;
- assembling critical mass;
- licensing, copyright, and interlibrary loan;
- partnerships;
- many modes of acquisition;
- collection management in the electronic age;
- archiving;
- publishing through digitization;
- services;
- multimedia;
- staffing issues; and
- costs and cost models

The editor also takes a look at what the future holds for electronic scholarly publication, identifying discernible trends in the field.

The Spec Kit was written by George Soete, **Transforming Libraries** *Editor, with editorial advice from Prudence Adler, ARL Assistant Executive Director, Federal Relations and Information Policy.*

The electronic component of this issue can be found at <http://arl.cni.org/transform/esp/index.html>.