North American News

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At the Charleston Conference this Fall, my friend and colleague Helen Henderson asked if I would be interested in writing the "View from North America" column for *Serials*. The first time I met Helen she was handing me a nicely chilled glass of Mumm's *Cordon Rouge*. How could I refuse? I accepted, and my first effort follows.

By way of introducing myself, I should say that this is my twenty-ninth year in the Library industry; most of that time has been spent in the world of serials. I have worked over the years for Faxon, CLSI, UMI, Teltech (now Sopheon), and RoweCom. My current title is Director, Library Strategic Initiatives. This mostly means that I get to think up cool stuff and my poor benighted colleagues get to do the actual work. It is a pretty good deal.

One of the most enjoyable parts of my job is Market Intelligence. I collect, through means fair and foul, industry reports, competitor news, press releases, baseless rumours, vicious irresponsible gossip, etc., and distribute it to key players within the RoweCom organization.

For the purposes of this column, my plan is to try to cover five areas:

Intellectual property issues – As most readers surely know, the US is going through a period of redrawing its intellectual property laws. I will try to keep UK readers up to date on the progress (if that's the right word) of UCITA, the Digital Millennium Copyright Act, and other IP news.

Company, technology, and product news – I will try to focus on new technologies, primarily.

Electronic journals – The UK leads the Colonies, in some ways, in this critical area, but there are always new developments of general interest.

Conference presentations – I attend many of the US conferences and will feature presentations of general interest.

Association and community news – I will report on the activities of organizations such as ARL, whose activities are focused on North America, and initiatives such as SPARC and BioONE.

So without further ado, here is the first report. The envelope, please:

Intellectual property issues

In October, James Billington, the Librarian of Congress, issued a ruling allowing only two exceptions to the *Digital Millennium Copyright Act*, which outlaws attempts to disable or bypass technologies designed to protect intellectual property in electronic form. The two classes of copyrighted exempted from the law are:

- Compilations consisting of lists of websites blocked by filtering software applications
- Works protected by mechanisms that have failed and thus prevented access.

Billington's ruling was based on recommendations made by the Copyright Office and elicited strong negative reactions from the library community. See:
http://www.libraryjournal.com/articles/news/thisweek/20001030_16856.asp for details.

From a Press release at the *National Writers*

Union: http://www.nwu.org: "Today [ed. note: 11/6/2000] the US Supreme Court announced that it has agreed to hear the September 24th 1999 landmark decision by the Court of Appeals (2nd Circuit), Tasini v. The New York Times. The Appeals Court had ruled that it is copyright infringement for a publisher to put a freelancers work on-line or otherwise reuse or resell it without explicit permission. If the Supreme Court upholds the ruling, publishers will be vulnerable to potentially huge liability for past and current copyright infringement. Defendant-publishers in the case include Newsday, Time Incorporated, Lexis-Nexus, and The New York Times, among others."

See The New York Times coverage at: Supreme Court to Take On Electronic Rights of Writers http://www.nytimes.com/2000/11/06/national/06CND-LANCE.html

Electronic Journals

Go to http://www.pfeifferreport.com/trends/ett_online.html for a piece claiming that: "The absence of a valid business model for on-line publications will push pure content sites out of business, or reduce them to an add-on for traditional [[i.e. print-ed.]] publications. This trend reflects a maturation of the Internet and of the content market as a whole. Users are becoming increasingly aware that various media have different strong points."

This is one of Pfeiffer's Emerging Trends and Technologies reports.

From a BioOne press release:

Washington, DC – BioOne (www.BioOne.org). A new web-based aggregation of research in the biological, ecological and environmental sciences, today announced the second set of highly-cited, peer-reviewed journals which have decided to participate in the project. BioOne's launch is slated for 2001. In addition to the 14 journals that have already signed on to BioOne, 17 journals have announced they plan to include their full texts in BioOne:

- American Midland Naturalist (University of Notre Dame)
- Annals of the ESA (Entomological Society of America)
- The Auk (American Ornithologists' Union)
- The Coleopterists Bulletin (Coleopterists Society)
- Conservation Ecology (Resilience Alliance)
- Environmental Entomology (Entomological Society of America)
- Evolution (Society for the Study of Evolution)
- Journal of Avian Medicine and Surgery (Association of Avian Veterinarians)
- Journal of Economic Entomology (Entomological Society of America)
- Journal of Eukaryotic Microbiology (Society of Protozoologists)
- Journal of Mammalogy (American Society of Mammalogists)
- Journal of Medical Entomology (Entomological Society of America)
- The Journal of Paleontology (The Paleontological Society)
- Mammalian Species (American Society of Mammalogists)
- Paleobiology (The Paleontological Society)
- Radiation Research (Radiation Research Society)
- Systematic Botany (American Society of Plant Taxonomists)

[Ed. Note: BioOne plans a March 2001 launch.]

Company, technology, and product news

– from the OCLC annual report:

"For the year ended June 30, 2000, OCLC's revenues were $153 million, up 5 percent from the previous year as libraries continued to increase their use of OCLC's online cataloging, resource sharing and reference services. Contribution to equity was $4.9 million. OCLC provided member libraries with $9.2 million in credits for cataloging and resource sharing to encourage the growth and quality of WorldCat. In addition, OCLC launched two new services—the OCLC Cooperative Online Resource Catalog (CORC) service and the OCLC WebExpress service." See http://www.oclc.org for the full report.

The following is a bit out of scope but interesting:

BountyQuest is a company that enables "Bounty Posters" to its site to pay $10,000 cash bounties to anyone who can provide them with information ("prior art" in patent jargon) that invalidates a competitor's patent. http://www.bountyquest.com

Conference presentations

This *Fall's CNI conference* was, as always, well worth attending. I do not have sufficient space to feature all of them, unfortunately, but there is a list at http://www.cni.org. The plenaries focused on the Open Archives Initiative (http://www.openarchives.org/), sfx (http://www.sfxit.com), and the Open URL specification (information also on the sfx site). Since sfx originated in Belgium, I am sure that most European readers are already familiar with it. The Open URL Initiative had a North American origin, so I will report on it as things develop.

For readers not familiar with this project, it is a set of technical and operational initiatives originally designed to enable e-print operators (such as Ginsparg at Los Alamos) to expose their metadata so that service providers could develop services that would enable users to "harvest" the metadata (search across one or more e-print servers using a single search argument, collect and download the search results).

After it was announced, the founders realized that their ideas had applicability beyond its intended use with e-prints, and so are now in the process of generalizing it at a series of meetings that will take place next year. The Mellon Foundation is funding several harvesting applications that are under development.

Perhaps the most entertaining presentation came from Kirsten Swearingen, Graduate Student Researcher, School of Information, University of California – Berkeley. She described the results of the Lyman and Vania study that attempted to answer the question, "How much information exists?" The answer turned out to be, "A lot". The writers estimate that humans produce between one and two exabytes PER YEAR. (1,000 gigabytes = 1 terabyte; 1,000 terabytes = 1 petabyte; 1,000 petabytes = 1 exabyte).

Two exabytes could be stored on a stack of floppy disks…if the stack were 24 million miles high. Your Reporter pointed out, not without some glee, that the authors had left out signage from their calculations. I estimate this category would add a couple of petabytes a year all by itself, judging from the number of Coca-cola and McDonald's signs in my neighborhood. This penetrating insight was Your Reporter's most important contribution to the conference, by far. *See:* sfx (http://www.sfxit.com), for the full report.

My colleague Stuart Silcox of RoweCom/Canada reports on the *Canadian National Site License Initiative* as follows:

"We might want to mention something about the Canadian National Site License Agreement (CNSLP). See http://www.uottawa.ca/library/carl/, click on issues and projects to get more info. Basically, the Universities in Canada have received matched funding from the government to go after ejournals as a consortium. I think the numbers are about $35 million over the three years from the Universities, matched by the Federal Government (CFI) – not a lot when spread out over the whole country

The CNSLP/PCLSN will operate as a three-year pilot project, funded through an award from the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI) and contributions from participating institutions and other government partners. As a condition of CFI funding, project participants are committed to sustaining the project beyond the termination of CFI seed funding. CFI is a corporation established by the Canadian federal government in 1997. CFI's mandate is to promote innovation by investing in research infrastructure at Canadian universities, colleges and other institutions, thereby increasing their capability to carry out world-class research and development in the areas of science, health , engineering and the environment.".

I hope you find these reports useful and will do my best to focus them on the most important issues here in North America.