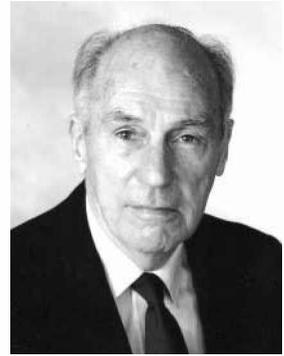


The Great Debate – a small dash of history

In the course of categorising his journal's archives, the author ponders the history of the print vs online debate and sets forth his own model of print and electronic collaboration.



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As editor since 1990 of 'LOGOS', a broad-spectrum journal serving the world book and journal community, I have naturally followed closely all aspects of the Great Debate between print and online. On both the micro and macro levels, I have found that being technically innocent and commercially uninvolved ('LOGOS' is non-profit-making) has helped me be philosophical and remain editorially neutral.

Neutral between whom? As every *Serials* reader knows, there are four interested (not intrinsically adversarial, because they all need one another) parties – academics, librarians, vendors (aggregators) and publishers. Cutting across these four there are two definitely adversarial parties – the cyber enthusiasts and the traditionalists, with the former being the more vocal. As seen from thirteen years in my editorial chair, the four have begun to evolve solutions based on cohabitation, while the other two have remained largely unmoving. This may be because the first four are in the firing line and led by pragmatists, while the other two tend to be led by expositors rather than practitioners.

Philosophically, there are only two questions, one posed by law and ethics and the other by economics and commerce. The challenge to law and ethics is the expectation on the part of users, in addition to being encouraged by the cyber gurus, that all information should be free, and some day will be. The challenge to economics and commerce is how to make prices and profits correspond to investment and need.

Journals, particularly scientific journals, were the obvious first arena in which these issues had to be faced. This was signalled by dissension amongst the four parties starting at the end of the 1970s, when library budgets began to be cut.

Publishers at first were defensive and alarmed at what they saw as a threat to their livelihood, or as their opponents claimed, their excessive profits. Libraries were upset, some in the United States were even aggressive, because they were under fiscal pressure in the short term and felt threatened with obsolescence in the long term. Document supply and interlibrary lending can be seen historically as defensive measures by libraries. Vendors, now called aggregators, feared they might cease to have any role at all, while academics with Olympian detachment, sought the best of both worlds, that is, the prestige of print and the immediacy of free access on the internet.

Since 1990, all four constituencies have shown increasing readiness to compromise and adapt. The extent to which they have done this, and who in the course of it has gained or lost ground, would become clear if the history of the Great Debate were to be written. But everyone is too busy these days to bother with history.

Pursuing this thought, it occurred to me that the 'LOGOS' archive might throw a small shaft of light on progress to date. In the course of categorising the entire 'LOGOS' archive into topic portfolios I located twenty-five articles on copyright, thirteen on electronic publishing, five on the future of the book, twenty-five on libraries, fourteen on academic, professional and scholarly publishing and twenty-four on journals. Each of these topic portfolios reveals historic progression. They were not planned with this in mind. The goal of LOGOS is simply to identify issues affecting the author/editor/publisher/librarian/bookseller/reader relationship and persuade authorities in each specialisation to express their views with the

stipulation that they should

- a) write for a non-specialised but professional audience
- b) not be ephemeral

c) reflect personal experience

- d) offer both contemporary analysis and a view of the future.

The journals portfolio consists of the following:

Year	Title	Author	Affiliation (at the time of writing)
1990	Librarians, journal publishers and scholarly information: Whose leaky boat is sinking?	Herbert S White	Dean, School of Library and Information Science, Indiana University.
1990	Journal publishers, librarians and scholarly information: Contemplating a future scenario	Timothy B King	Vice-President, Planning and Development, John Wiley & Sons.
1991	Specialist journals in America: romantic highs, fiscal bottoms and a recipe for survival	Irving Louis Horowitz	President, Transaction Publishers, Rutgers University.
1991	Back to academia: the case for American university presses to publish their own research	Ann Okerson	Director, Office of Scientific and Academic Publishing of the Association of Research Libraries.
1991	Subscription agents: why librarians and publishers take them for granted	John Cox	Director, Blackwells Periodicals Division.
1992	The commercial role in journal publishing: past, present and future	Robert Campbell	Managing Director, Blackwell Science.
1993	Subscription agencies: fewer, tougher, more agile and beleaguered	Wim Luijendijk	General Manager, EBSCO Subscription Services, Europe.
1994	'Just in Case' vs 'just in time': A librarian ruminates about journals, technology and money	Bernard Naylor	Librarian, University of Southampton.
1995	Copyright, pricing and market power: the great journals debate	Colin Day	Director, University of Michigan Press.
1995	Research journals: a question of economic value	Albert Henderson	Publishing consultant and Editor of 'Publishing Research Quarterly'.
1996	Journals face the electronic future	Pieter S H Bolman	President, Academic Press.
1996	Access to journals: a joint publisher/librarian analysis	David Russon and Robert Campbell	Deputy Chief Executive, British Library. Managing Director, Blackwell Science.
1997	African scholarly journals: slow decline or quantum jump	Jacob Jaygbay	Senior Assistant Editor, Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa.
1998	The great journals crisis: a complex present, but a collegial future	John Cox	Managing Director, Carfax Publishing Limited.
1998	The great journals crisis: an African <i>cri de coeur</i>	Ajibole M Oyinloye	Collection Development Librarian, Lagos State University Library.
1999	The serials community: an eternal triangle seeks collaboration through dialogue	Paul Harwood	Director, Swets United Kingdom Ltd and Marketing Officer, UKSG.
1999	Document supply and the small journals publisher: a case of legalized injustice	Stephen Godfree	Executive Director, Leaf Coppin Publishers.
2001	Document supply and journal subscriptions	David Russon, Andrew Braid and David Inglis	Deputy Chief Exec., British Library Head of Publisher Liaison at the British Document Supply Centre. Director of the Digital Library Programme, British Library.
2001	Effecting change through competition: the evolving scholarly communications marketplace	Richard K Johnson	Enterprise Director of SPARC (Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition).
2001	Scholarly communication: what do scholars want?	Anthony Watkinson	Consultant on publishing and information science.
2001	Re-shaping scholarly publishing: the Berkeley Solution	Greg Tananbaum	President, the Berkeley Electronic Press.
2002	The road to e-publishing: progress and plans of a leading publisher	Kelly Franklin	Vice-President, Business Development for John Wiley & Sons Professional & Trade Division.

The lists on related subjects such as copyright, electronic publishing, future of the book, libraries and academic professional and scholarly publishing all give a similar impression that we have here history in the making, the message of which is surprisingly positive. This is the usefulness of history, which tends to be neglected by all of us under the pressure of daily demands.

This exercise brought the question to my own doorstep. If as I maintain, this and the other thirty-four portfolios have contemporary value, should they not be available on the internet? 'LOGOS' does have a website at www.whurr.co.uk/PJBW/IntroCentre.Fr.html, but it is purely for publicity. It gives background on the journal; abstracts of articles in the current issue, and from 2003 will include the cumulative index, which has hitherto appeared annually in print. The main reason that 'LOGOS' is not, and will not be a full text website is that it addresses an eclectic, albeit influential, audience. It is not browser material, nor is it a research journal, rather a forum for professional comment and opinion. Furthermore, and here my neutrality deserts me, 'LOGOS' is not suitable for on-screen reading.

One of the unintended consequences of the Great Debate has been to expose the difference between readers and users. Our booth at Frankfurt last October where we launched the portfolios, announced

'LOGOS':

For the thoughtful reader

No news No advertising No hurry

The last of these three is the best reason for 'LOGOS' to confine itself to paper.

Another reason is that I want to know to whom I am talking. Deliberate words should not be thrown into the winds of cyberspace.

We do have some experience of full text online. The Open Society Institute in Budapest a few years ago kindly put the full text of fifty 'LOGOS' articles on its website. The number of 'hits' was impressive but who were they and did they read or simply glance? We do not know. With a paper journal, subscribers have made a deliberate choice, and shown faith by paying in advance. Publishers know who they are and can make a good guess at any secondary readership.

It is my subjective impression that little or no serious reading is done at the screen. Serious readers print out. In a sense, electronic publishers

can be said to have transferred the time and expense of printing to their readers. A friend of mine, an expert on Computer Aided Design, told me he was clearing out an office where he and his colleagues had worked on a project for two years and where every useful piece of text they had found online had been printed out and filed. So much for the paperless office. On the other hand this very act of printing information shows how the two media can work together – online for research and quick facts, paper for deliberate reading.

The topic portfolios are available in a tactile format of proven usefulness: loose-leaf, which provides both for discards and additions and which can be adapted to the personal use of each reader. Topic portfolios are assembled to the requirements of each subscriber. They are free to new subscribers, one each, half price to established subscribers and full price to non subscribers. During my years in law publishing, I learnt about the merits both of loose-leaf and of repackaging for different audiences. Produced originally for the generalist in a journal that prides itself on its diversity, the archive is now repackaged for the specialist.

So this small dash of history also forced me to exemplify in 'LOGOS' one of the issues of the Great Debate. Electronic journals are right for some subjects, but not for 'LOGOS'. Speaking for writers, I do not want to be used, I want to be read. I write a monthly column for an e-journal called 'The Book & The Computer', that has no paper version. Recently I wrote to the editor asking him who was the reading audience and he did not know. Electronic-only journals to my mind break the essential personal link between author and reader. It becomes broadcasting and not publishing.

Signing a copyright release for the British Library Sound Archive a few months ago, I stipulated that the text should never be available on the internet, only a summary. Anyone who wants to hear my story has to take a bus to St Pancras and apply personally. This way I know they are serious and obviously not in a hurry. History cannot be rushed, and those who wish to gain by reading it should consciously slow down.

The author invites readers of *Serials* to contact him for more information about LOGOS Topic Portfolios, which are assembled to an individual specification.
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