# Written submission to the "AG Neue Medien und Bibliotheken" of the Wissenschaftsrat

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This document is prepared as a written submission to a hearing of the working group on new media and libraries of the Wissenschaftsrat on 2000–12–21, in the office of the Wissenschaftsrates, Brohler Straße 11, 50968 Köln. Its latest version is available on the web at http://openlib.org/home/krichel/takeda.html. I am grateful to Rick Johnson of SPARC for documents that have been helpful for the preparation of this document. All opinions expressed here are only my own.

## 0 Text of the submitted questions

Rollen und Aufgaben der Beteiligten in der Publikationskette verdändern sich ebenso wie ihr Zusammenwirken durch den Strukturwandel. Diese werden nicht ohne Auswirkungen auf den Zugang zu Informationen für die Nutzer bleiben.
1. Wie läßt sich der Wandel der Bibliotheken als lokale Dienstleistungsanbieter in den Hochschulen und in verteilten nationalen und internationalen Informationssystemen beschreiben?
2. Welche Entwicklung neuartiger Dienstleistungen und deren Vermarktung bei Verlagen und sonstigen Informationsanbietern sehen Sie?
3. Teilen Sie die These, daß einer globalen Informationsflut in zunehmendem Maße ein Informationsmangel in den Bibliotheken gegenüber steht, welcher auch durch die Preispolitik der Verlage im Vergleich zu den Budgetentwicklungen der Bibliotheken bedingt ist?
4. Wie beurteilen Sie die Forderungen nach einer Profilbildung Wissenschaftlicher Bibliotheken und einem vermehrten Wettbewerb der Bibliotheken untereinander und mit anderen Anbietern (Fachgruppen, FIZ, kommerzielle Anbieter, etc.)?
5. Welche Mölichkeiten der Kooperation und des Zusammenschlusses der auf verteilten Informationsressourcen beruhenden (digitalen) Bibliotheken sehen Sie (bspw. Bildung von Konsortien zum Erwerb von Lizenzen als auch zur Förderung gemeinsamer Entwicklungen)?
6. Welche Möglichkeiten sehen Sie, die Ansätze der Santa Fe Convention und der Open Archive Initiative auf Deutschland zu übertragen?

## 1 Change in libraries

To describe change means in part forecasting it. I foresee a decline of the institutional academic library. Much of its current work lies in the treatment of printed documents. Many of the tasks that arise here will decline in importance. To have any future at all, it is important that libraries reinvent themselves. This is not happening yet. I have to agree with Andrew M. Odlyzko whom I heard saying that there is a lot happening in scholarly communication, but it is happening outside the library. The challenge is to make it happen in the library.
As a local provider, the library will get more involved in the negotiation for the provision of contents rather than as a storage site for contents. This agenda is forced upon libraries by the publishing sector as it is moving towards electronic delivery. This is a medium-term development. In the longer run this task may be taken over by publishers directly negotiating with faculty users.
Within the global scholarly information systems, the library ought to take on a more active rôle in making locally produced material more widely available. By those locally produced material I mean the research documents of the staff, the doctoral dissertation, and other incidental material such as datasets for example. The dissemination of local material in a global scientific catalog is one of the most challenging tasks for libraries in the next couple of decades.

## 2 Developing new services

When we look at the rôle of the library within an academic institution, I am a partisan of making the libraries more active it the publishing sector. That means I would like to see that libraries becoming more involved in the collaborative provision and distribution of digital material.

Some of that material should be made available for free. However there is significant scope for making data available on a cost-recovery basis. I am thinking in particular about a service like Jstor, who certainly recover costs. They are not cheap. I think there is ample room for competition here.
I also suggest to think about document delivery services. There is much scope for reducing journal subscriptions to high cost journals if a there is reliable document delivery service.
Third I believe that there is scope for cost recovery in electronic learning services. Libraries should cooperate with departmental groups to set up distant learning services. This is a growing market, with a considerable first-mover advantage.

## 3 Information glut and poverty

I do not think that there is an information glut on the Internet. What we have on the Internet is a data glut. The vast part of really valuable information is closed behind toll-gates or other obstacles. There is a infant culture of high quality free information in the Internet. It is too early to see if that free information culture can really build a free research library.
The pricing policy of the publishers is quite rational. It is very difficult to make rising profits in the face of total sales that are essentially stagnant. Raising prices and reducing sales is one way to achieve that. As a result, we have the serials crisis.
However it is not entirely true that all journal price are all high. Some journals are quite reasonably priced. I am most familiar with Economics journals. Here we have reasonable prices say for the Journal of Public Economic Theory ($240 per year to libraries) or the American Economic Revue, ($142 per year), Econometrica ($178), the Canadian Journal of Economics ($120), or the Journal of Political Economy ($159). They contrast with the Journal of Public Economics ($1431), Economic Letters ($1492) or Public Choice ($1000). The source for this data is Ted Bergstrom's homepage at http://www.econ.ucsb.edu/~tedb/. The most expensive item, the Journal of Economic Studies, can be generously described as a third tear journal. No important paper has ever been published there. At $6900, it is a complete waste of resources to buy it. The answer to these high-cost publications is clear. Libraries should cancel the subscriptions, encourage faculty not to referee for them, and students not to read them.
To conclude this section, let me quote another insight from Odlysko (2000), where he writes "The journals crisis is really a library cost crisis. For every dollar that libraries spend on journals, they spend at least two on internal costs." It really is the library community who make the journals the valuable product that they are by storing it and organizing it without charge to the publishers. Libraries should be more aware of that.

## 4 Competition from outside

Competition does not need to be called for. It is happening today. Change may be slow, but all the signs are that libraries are moving off the center stage. There is more and more contents on the web, and some of it is of sufficient quality to base scientific work on. If these trends continue, libraries as repositories of knowledge will be replaced by some web-based system within the next twenty years. If we want to believe Arms (2000), then there is a distinct risk that more and more the tasks that are currently performed by librarian within libraries will in the future be performed by computers in an automated way. While this future may be ten or twenty years away, the signs are that this are moving towards it today.
In order to gear up in the competition, a specialization of libraries would be required. That is libraries should seek to build new services in certain specialized areas. Example for business ideas are given in Answer 1. Secondly, libraries have to become more astute at marketing services to the community outside the local institution.

## 5 Cooperation between libraries

There is a growing trend to oppose monopoly power of publisher with an olgiopsony of purchasers. This is clearly beneficial to libraries who do no longer face the sad fate of a price-taker. I think that this trend will end up by putting an upper bound to publishers price hikes. In the UK negotiations that are conducted on a nation-wide scale are proving to be reasonably effective, be it at a risk that no agreement can be reached and certain products will not be purchased.
As far as the development of new services is concerned, I do believe that the way forward is to set up services on a small scale initially. Creating some sort of formal library innovation framework is not likely to work because innovation is not usually coming out of such structures. Innovation should concentrate on digitalization of scholarly documents that are held in the library and on the provision of new multi-media learning materials. For the latter, cooperation with faculty appears to be essential.
More generally the question arises of the rôle of libraries in bringing about changes in scholarly communication. Naturally libraries find that this is a difficult problem because they are not at the heart of scholarly communication. On

important initiative in the US is the “Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition” SPARC. The aims of SPARC are, according to Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resource Coalition (2000)

- To create a more competitive scholarly communication marketplace where the costs of journals acquisition, archiving, and use are reduced, and where publishers who are responsive to customer needs are rewarded;
- To ensure fair use of electronic resources, while at the same time strengthening the proprietary rights and privileges of authorship;
- To improve the process of scholarly communication and to reduce the costs of production and distribution.

These objectives are very important. The German library community should think carefully about how to support them. SPARC have been active in promoting a number of alternative publishing venues through pump-priming subsidies. These have had a varying degree of success. The critical problem is the lack of reputation of any new publishing venture, in particular if it uses predominantly electronic means. A good editorial board is a condition *sine qua non*, but by no means sufficient. On the other hand libraries have been complaining that the SPARC outlets create more channels on which they have to spend money. SPARC however have been countering these arguments by showing the cost savings made by the indirect impact of the existence of SPARC journals on other journal prices. The importance of SPARC is that it has a helping hand in many new ventures. Some of them will fail and others flourish, but all are worth trying out.
An important branch of SPARC is propaganda. They have developed a new web site http://www.createchange.org to encourage the reflection on scholarly communication reform. In my view it is imperative that the German libraries support dissemination of that web site. The problems that it discusses are really evident on a global scale.

## 6 Santa Fe Convention

The Santa Fe Convention is essentially history, but its spirit is alive in two ways.
First, the technical specifications have been enlarged to become the Open Archives protocol. This is a general metadata-based interoperability protocol. It is easier to implement and more general than that the specifications laid down in the Santa Fe Convention. The new protocol transports any metadata that is expressed in XML. It can be used by any digital library that wishes to expose metadata about its collection through a machine interface. This will go a long way towards addressing interoperability issues that the digital library community has been struggling with for a while.
Second, the Open Archive Initiative will continue to sponsor work that aims to generalize the eprint concept as a freely accessible work of scientific character. In this field there is a lot of opportunity for implementation in Germany. Much of this is well presented in the DINI Deutsche Initiative für Netzwerkinformation (2000) . The Wissenschaftsrat should call for supportive action from the funding organizations. They should request all reports about publicly funded research to be made available online, in full, and at no charge to the reader.

## References

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