

# If Journals Did Not Exist, Would We Invent Them?

Digital Library Federation

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# A Special Flavor of Futurology

- *Not:* Today is the *next* day of the rest of your life
- *But:* Today is the *first* day of the rest of your life
- These are two very different things
- We are starting with a blank sheet . . . of paper?

# A World without Journals

- Difficult to imagine
- Journals helped to build the world
- But a world without *legacy* journals is a different matter
- Starting anew without the help or hindrance of Elsevier, Springer, CrossRef, etc. (the “First Dynasty”)

# Discourse and Context

- Discourse is embedded in communities
- Scholarly discourse is embedded in scholarly communities
- Scholarly communities are narrow and specialized: what makes them scholarly in part is that they don't reach out to a broader audience
- In the absence of a medium, communities will invent one

# Inventing a Medium

- No print—no one starting today would bother with hardcopy
- Email inadequate for community communications
- Communities would create a common place, a Web site
- Funding through membership fees

# Inventing a Medium--II

- Goal of low membership fees, hence low costs
- Thus few trappings of legacy journals
- E.g., no pre-publication peer review, no editorial boards
- Members are entitled to write (post) and read
- Access implicitly restricted to membership

# Sidebar: Open Access

- Irrelevant in a membership-based publication environment
- Members write and read; specialized discourse does not invite non-members
- Access is “free,” but membership costs

The call for Open Access is an artifact of the breakdown of scholarly communities caused in part by the rise of research libraries and the servicing, for better or worse, of those libraries by commercial interests.



# What about Peer Review?

- Pre-publication peer review is an artifact of the high cost of print production
- New, community-developed journals will police research through membership controls
- Post-publication peer review, in the form of commentary layered upon published work, will replace the current system

# New Services for Communities

- Post-publication peer review requires more sophisticated software
- Layering of commentary must be precise and clear
- Published work must be logged and archived
- Content-management software essential for publishing abstracts and extracts
- Automated linking services

# The Provider of New Services

- Elite institutions will “roll their own,” possibly as an outgrowth of the emerging institutional repositories, at least at first
- Most institutions will seek third-party services (hosting, software, content management, archiving, etc.)
- Communities will contract with these service bureaus
- Over time, elite institutions will outsource, too

# Evolution of Service Providers

- Perceived economies in sharing services
- Consolidation: many communities, one service provider
- More economies in further consolidation: service providers buying service providers
- Ongoing outsourcing by elite institutions

# Law of Unintended Consequences

- Consolidated service providers become increasingly dominant in value chain
- More services are created, requiring investment, resulting in more consolidation
- Service providers gain pricing power
- Rising costs motivates communities to seek institutional subsidies
- The library sales channel is reinvented

# Emergence of Second Dynasty

- Growing libraries and service providers undermine incumbent communities
- Service providers introduce new publications/services without preexisting communities to generate them, taking advantage of libraries' purchasing power
- Infusion of capital as new markets develop

# Summary: Journals of the Future

- Born in specialized scholarly communities
- Rapidly evolving software tools to provide services traditionally associated with libraries
- Third-party service providers will evolve, with communities as customers
- The service-providers will consolidate
- Service-providers become more powerful

# Summary II

- New services get invented, increasing cost and capital requirements
- More consolidation
- Communications seek help from libraries
- Libraries become primary customers
- Communities weaken as libraries grow
- New products without community underpinning



# Wish List for Next Steps

- New scholarly services that support the development of intellectual communities
- Libraries organized around single intellectual disciplines and attached to those disciplines rather than to a university
- An emphasis on automation rather than higher-quality (for now) human-created services