

Humanities e-books: precedent, challenges, and solutions

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About me

- Statistician Carnegie Mellon University
- Publisher Mary Ann Liebert, Inc.
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About Atypon

- Software development company focused on delivering solutions for publishers
- Recently acquired eMeta, which allows us to expand our range of services
- Clients include JSTOR, American Chemical Society, N Engl J Med, and more
- Technology partner for CrossRef's citation linking resolution system



Outline

- Precedent
- Challenges
- Solutions



Precedent

(we've been through this before)



Staged approach

- 5 journals in 1999
- 7 journals in 2000
- The rest (~35) in 2001
- Simultaneous launches
- Legacy archive
- Online only



Some of the first

- Journal of Biological Chemistry
- The Astrophysical Journal
- Science
- Journal of Neuroscience
- Journal of the American Chemical Society
- Proc Natl Acad Sci USA



By the time humanities journals started coming online in droves in the early 2000s, the cost of electronic publishing had dropped considerably. Had this not happened, many humanities journals would still not be online.

The cost had dropped considerably because STM journals subsidized most of the technology development.



New book clients

- I in 2007
- 3 in 2008
- 5 already in 2009
- How many in 2010?



Challenges

(business and technology)



Déjà vu all over again?

- We can't go online
- We can't make abstracts free
- We can't sell articles pay-per-view
- We can't sell in China
- We can't adopt open access
- We can't...



Journals challenges

- Issues were too large (literally) for the USPS to ship them at bulk rates
- Dissemination needed to be faster to keep up with the pace of discovery
- Search became essential for being able to locate the relevant content
- If a picture says 1,000 words, then a video says 1,000,000 words



Books challenges

- Humanities books are typically priced below \$50, so the margin is very small
- While monographs may have chapters, they aren't helpful for information discovery
- It's much harder to achieve a critical mass with books than with journal articles
- There's no evidence that, given the choice, users prefer reading monographs online



Technology challenges

- Some books are in a series (and therefore share metadata) and others are not
- Monographs, textbooks, and yearbooks, each of which are structured differently
- Lack the consistency that issues and even journals have across the entire industry
- All of these variations can be seen within a single publisher's books



Technology challenges

- Users want to search for books—not chapters—whereas issues have no standing
- The amount and variability of metadata for books greatly exceeds that of issues
- Users are interested in downloading the entire book as well as individual chapters
- Many implications for COUNTER, some of which have not been addressed



Do you know what the chapters are?

5. Die Elemente der Nebengruppen	
5.1.1 Materie im Magnetfeld	659 659 661
Russel-Saunders-Terme	662 665 665 669 674
5.3 Neutronenbeugung	678 680 680 682
5.4.4 Stabilität und Reaktivität von Komplexen 5.4.5 Die Valenzbindungstheorie von Komplexen 5.4.6 Die Ligandenfeldtheorie 5.4.6.1 Oktaedrische Komplexe 5.4.6.2 Tetraedrische Komplexe	683 687 689 690 690 700
5.4.6.3 Quadratisch-planare Komplexe	702

The publisher wasn't sure, either.



Solutions

(perhaps)



Your "lunch"

- Branding
- Control over pricing
- Direct relationship with the customer
- Profit margin



In the history of the world—or certainly in the history of publishing—there has never been anything more important than branding. Do not give it up.

There's a good reason one of the Coca-Cola Company's biggest annual expenses is advertising despite the fact that it maintains a wide lead over rival PepsiCo.

http://www.nytimes.com/ref/business/20070527_COKE_GRAPHIC.html



Don't...

- Give up branding (co-branding is marginally better than not having any at all)
- Sacrifice long-term revenues to get in the game for no money down
- Go online just because "if it isn't online it doesn't exist"—that's not true



Do...

- Find a solution that meets your short- and long-term revenue goals
- Leverage the value that your business has to vendors—there are deals to be had
- Use your journals to propel your books into the mix with a multi-product platform



A multi-product platform is a single application that delivers all of a publisher's content types (journals, books, and more) and provides common services (access control, content management, business intelligence, and more) to publisher administrators, librarians, and researchers.



Market characteristics

- Usage is the currency
- Volume of content matters
- Few big players dominate
- Big deals make life easier
- Content type is irrelevant



Summary

- Once again, STM publishers are driving technology development
- Depending on what you publish, you may want to take a "wait and see" approach
- Explore solutions that allow you to test the waters without eating your lunch
- If you also publish journals, consider the power of a multi-product platform





Thank you

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