

CAUL, CONCERT and AMIGOS talk consortia with Emerald

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Historically, library consortia were created to enable quicker and easier access to more information through collaborative arrangements. Relationships between scholarly publishers and consortia of academic libraries have matured. However, cultural and legal requirements mean that expectations from consortia and their members differ from country to country.

Having recently renewed a number of important consortia deals world-wide, Emerald Group Publishing talks to three consortia in an attempt to better understand how they work: CAUL in Australia, CONCERT in Taiwan and Amigos in the USA share their views on matters such as usage, licensing and new technologies.

Consortia activities

Group purchasing aside, all consortia have programs to support their members but their range of activities defies global generalisation. For Jeff Downing, Associate Director and Manager of Electronic Information Services at Amigos, "there are some ways in which we function like standard consortia, primarily in our group discount program, but then we have other ancillary programs which bring revenue to the organisation to support member services." Among their operations, he lists: "disaster preparation and recovery assistance, technology, and sales services in the USA and Canada for scholarly databases: BioOne, Project Euclid, etc."

Diane Costello, Executive Officer of CAUL, describes some of their main activities: "we have a Best Practice program where we conduct some benchmarking both through statistics and through client satisfaction surveys. We have a Digital Theses program. We also have a National Borrowing Scheme which is completely universal for all students and staff at all our universities."

CONCERT, in Taiwan, also provides many added-value services to their members: "We collect and update related e-journal information to build up the 'CONCERT Electronic Journal Union Catalog'," Mei-suh Shih, Director of CONCERT, explains. "We co-ordinate training sessions, generally twice a year." Emerald has just completed a tour of training sessions for CONCERT members throughout Taiwan. A lot of work also goes into collecting e-training material of all CONCERT-licensed electronic resources on the CONCERT website.

...is licensing still as sensitive a subject as it used to be?

Licensing

Recently, Emerald has received good feedback for the flexibility of its licence agreement but is licensing still as sensitive a subject as it used to be? Maybe not, as Jeff Downing comments: "There are a number of efforts right now, such as SERU [the National Information Standards Organization's Shared E-Resource Understanding working group], attempting to eliminate the need for agreements altogether."

For Mei-suh Shih, the 'one size fits all' argument is an issue: "members have to subscribe to one package instead of only choosing the required journals and therefore subscribe to journals that they don't need."

In Australia, Diane Costello explains, "One of the key things was remote access and multiple site access without paying extra," but, she admits, most vendors include this now. "Journals moving between publishers and new journals coming into packages," she points out, "has to be really clearly defined to know how it is going to be handled once you already have a package."

Like Jeff Downing, Diane Costello concludes that "with most of the older publishers, we don't actually need to have such tight licenses because things haven't got out of hand."

Usage

Attitudes towards usage as a factor in renewal decisions vary slightly. CAUL has boasted record usage figures over the past few years, mainly because "Most of our members go electronic only and I think that makes a big difference," Diane Costello reveals. This may also explain why Diane Costello is of the opinion that: "I'm not sure it makes such a big difference. People will look at usage but content is big." Whereas Mei-suh Shih considers that: "usage now plays a more important role in renewal decision." For Bea Ramirez, Amigos A-Plus Member Discount Program Manager, usage is crucial too: "members ask for usage statistics to decide if they're going to renew or not."

Evolution

Consortia evolve primarily according to interactions with their members but, faithful to their co-operative role, keeping an eye on what other consortia are doing is essential part of the process. All three consortia are closely involved with ICOLC (international Coalition of Library Consortia).

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COUNCIL OF
AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIANS

Election **results**, ALIA Board of Directors 2007

Derek Whitehead has been elected Vice-president (President-elect). He will take up the presidency in 2008, holding office until 2009 AGM.

Damian Lodge and Kate Watson were elected as directors. Their terms on the ALIA Board of Directors will run until the 2009 AGM.

Ballot papers distributed: 5680 to the membership at large. The Australian Electoral Commission conducted the ballot count.

- Vice-presidential election: 819 formal ballot papers were received, with Kevin Dudeney gaining 263 votes and Derek Whitehead 556.
- Election of directors: 820 formal ballot papers were received. Damian Lodge and Kate Watson were declared elected after counting as below (exhausted votes 19; total votes 1638).

Candidates	First preference votes	Total votes following the distribution of preferences
Graham Black	265	Excluded
Richard Sayers	255	Excluded
Margaret Allen	365	515
Damian Lodge	344	534
Kate Watson	409	570

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"Just as my members stick together so that they don't have to invent everything themselves," Diane Costello comments, "we look at what other people do."

"We visit Korea and Japan to look at their consortia management," Mei-suh Shih adds. "We also hold an annual CONCERT meeting to share information."

Amigos "does not work in isolation, we are constantly looking at what other consortia do and seeing what works for them."

Whereas CONCERT is not considering adding new technologies to its services yet, CAUL "undoubtedly will when something makes our lives easier than it is now." Amigos is already in the process of adding blogs and social networking "to facilitate and foster the members helping each other," Eddy Smith, Director of Member Services Development at Amigos, reports.

This way, chances are that consortia will become even more the collaborative force they were created to be.



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