

EBOOKS LACKING CRUCIAL INDEXES



Thank you for a timely issue on ebooks. As a writer, indexer and librarian I am interested in this issue on three fronts.

Dean Mason (INCITE June 2011) writes that you can expect to get the same content when a book is published in print and electronic formats, "perhaps with hyperlinks to internal or external references". Unfortunately many ebooks

are missing a crucial set of internal references - those from the index to content in the book. This means that although ebooks have the same content, they have lost a way of accessing this content.

A recent article by Pierke Bosschietter, *The Kindle™ and The Indexer* (*The Indexer* Vol 28 No 3, September 2010) examined 19 'random' ebooks, and found that only two had fully functional indexes with links. Bosschietter notes "This quick survey suggests ... that most publishers think an orthodox index unnecessary in an eBook, the assumption being that an eReader search function can do the job, a view that isn't being challenged".

One of the books with a linked index, *The Indexing Companion* (of which I was co-author), was published by

Cambridge University Press (Melbourne) in 2007. CUP has been a pioneer in the use of embedded indexing in XML format, which allows the re-use of indexes in different formats. Bosschietter also notes with frustration that it isn't possible to tell before purchasing a book whether the index it says it has is linked or not. Plans to add page numbers to Kindle books (tinyurl.com/KindlePageNumbers) may make print indexes more usable in ebooks.

The NSW Branch of the Australian and New Zealand Society of Indexers sent a submission to the Book Industry Strategy Group discussing these issues. It can be viewed, along with other submissions (including one from ALIA), at tinyurl.com/BISGNSWANZSI. Protests by librarians about the lack of fully functional indexes would bring wider awareness to this problem.

With regard to pricing of ebooks, Dean Mason writes that Amazon has set a \$9.99 price point "regardless of the recommended retail price". This might apply to some books, but the Kindle version of *The Indexing Companion*, for example, sells for \$30.61. While a low price is good for consumers, it is not so for authors who rely on royalties for their income.

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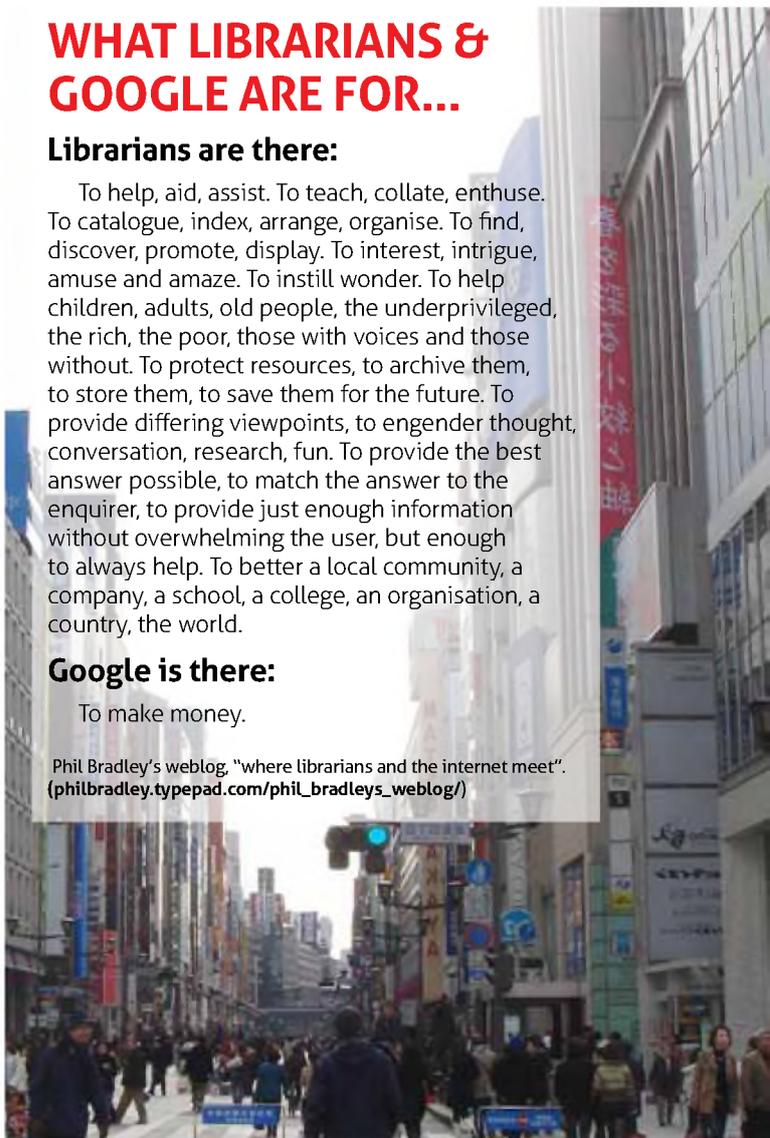
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