◆*What Librarians Want and Need from Journals*

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To answer the question "What do librarians want and need from journals?" Kate Thomes and Matt Marsteller sent a seven-item survey to 106 libraries. These two experienced librarians presented the results of the survey in a highly interactive session.

For the survey, a 5% random sample (106 libraries) was chosen from the *Directory of Special Libraries and Information Centers*. Thirty librarians at several types of libraries responded: 17 academic, 10 special, two public, and one unknown. The survey was designed to determine librarians' attitudes and opinions about scholarly journals. For this report, I categorized the items on the survey into two groups: issues common to librarians, editors, and publishers; and technology trends in publishing.

Three of the seven questions focused on issues common to librarians, editors, and publishers. Librarians' concern about increasing journal costs was evident in their answers to these questions. When asked to rank the problems that editors might be able to influence, the librarians considered the high cost of journals to be the most important. Cost was also the most common answer to the questions "What issues would librarians recommend editors raise with publishers?" and "What opportunities hold the most promise for librarians and editors to partner in improving scholarly communication?" The speakers pointed out that journal prices continue to increase more rapidly than library budgets. Members of the audience commented that increasing journal prices might be necessary to offset additional services, such as online access and rising production costs. Thomes discussed the "big deals" or licenses to multijournal packages offered by publishers. These deals commit libraries to more journals than they may want, to long-term payment plans, to price, and to price increases.

Librarians believed that editors might be able to influence issues other than cost, including suspect literature and a need for retraction, and citation styles that are too brief and cryptic. Marsteller gave a specific example of the second issue in which article titles and page numbers were not included in citations. He also showed a screen capture of the Science Citation Index from the Web of Science database, a major search tool in libraries. Many page-number fields were empty. Often, that was because journals had switched from page numbers to article numbers, and the article numbers had too many digits to fit in the field. Marsteller suggested that editors consider all the implications of such steps as changing from page numbers to article numbers. A discussion ensued about whether the publisher should change to accommodate the library or vice-versa.

The second group of items in the survey focused on technology trends in scholarly-journal publishing. Of the 30 responses, most rated digital access and desktop access as the most promising technology trend in journal publishing. Hyperlinks to other literature were ranked second; Marsteller found this interesting because in the late 1980s hyperlinks appeared to be the most promising technology.

The survey contained a series of questions on the "death of the journal" concept. Of the 30 respondents, 23 agreed that print journals have a continuing role, and 27 believed that the journal as an entity would still be relevant in 10 years. The reasons given for the value of the print journal included archival concerns for digital material; organization of articles, book reviews, advertising, and more in journals as opposed to free-standing articles; and the aesthetics of print journals vs digital material.

Another question in the survey asked, "Assuming that journals are here to stay, how can digital technology be used to make journal literature more efficient, dynamic, or interactive?" The respondents ranked the three options—think beyond the print model, establish virtual journals, and continue and expand linking cooperation—approximately equally. The librarians polled believed that if journals were to be replaced, the most promising possibility for scholarly communication was scholarly society or disciplinary repositories. Few believed that online dossiers of individual authors were promising. ⬥