Book review
Digital Information: order or anarchy?

Hazel Woodward and Lorraine Estelle (Editors)

Reviewed by Shantanu Ganguly*

Digital Information: order or anarchy? is a classic publication in today's age of digital information, which each and every digital librarian and other library and information professionals, who are planning to develop a digital library, should go through, so that the challenges they come across in the development of the library can be answered to some extent. The chapters in the book also discuss future developments in our digital universe and explore their potential impact on libraries, publishing companies, and all the other players in the marketplace.

The chapters by Anderson, Steele, and Russel essentially focus on the process and evolution of scholarly communication in the digital age from their own individual perspectives. Anderson identifies three 'crunch points' for libraries and publishers: searching for information, library collections, and pricing. Anderson works through various future scenarios, around these topics, and points to the essential mission change for academic and research libraries.

Collin Steele focuses on e-books and the future of scholarly communication. Technology is creating many opportunities for book publishers in terms of dissemination; witness the development of new e-book services, e-book readers, print-on-demand publications, and Espresso Book Machines.

Technological advances mean that non-traditional players can now create and disseminate digital information. Libraries are now publishers, and companies such as Google and Microsoft are undertaking mass digitization projects. Alastair Dunning's chapter, 'Digitizing the Past', describes how public-sector funding has resulted in the digitization of some collections.

Issues around intellectual property rights challenge not only the traditional publishers, but also the new players. In their chapter, Wilma Mossink and Lorraine Estelle describe the problems, and some of the work that is currently being undertaken to address them. The power of the Internet means that it has never been easier to create and access content and, perhaps more importantly, to reuse and 'mash-up' a number of content sources.

The users of digital content should be able to navigate through a well-ordered information environment to find the information they seek, without unreasonable barriers. However, as Graham Stone points out in his chapter on resource discovery, the landscape is messy and

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libraries face enormous challenges in the digital marketplace. The users are persuaded not to start the search for information by using library resources.

The chapters in this book focus mainly on the academic perspective. However, the issues tackled are pertinent to the broader information industry, including trade publishers, public libraries, and national libraries. The editors'

opening chapter provides an overview of the digital revolution and its impact on all these sectors. We live in a period of radical change, which provides for many opportunities but also threatens the status quo. According to Charles Darwin: 'It is not the strongest species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the ones most responsive to change.'