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Serials & E-Resources News

Report on the Content Acquisition Sessions of the Special Libraries Association (SLA) 2011 Conference, Philadelphia, PA

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The Special Libraries Association (SLA) Annual Conference was held June 12–15, 2011 in Philadelphia, PA. A number of sessions focused on issues concerning buying and selling content.

Partners' Strategies to Lead the Way

The Business & Finance Division sponsored a session on "Partners' Strategies to Lead the Way." A panel of data and information providers, which included Standard & Poor's, IBISWorld, Dow Jones, and BNA, discussed ways in which they partnered with information professionals to provide critical business information during the current challenging economic times.

Trends in the information industry included:

- Use of social media
- Dashboards to monitor performance metrics
- Consolidated, federated search engines
- Pricing models for selling slices of data and customized data
- Market expansion into multiple industries
- Incorporating information into customers' multiple internal systems
- Information being used for actionable decisions rather than just "informative communications"

Content providers discussed their points of concern:

- Information overload from the ever-increasing rate of information flow
- Epidemic of customer budget cuts
- Perception that "information should be free"
- Do information products for academic and non-academic users need to be different?
- How do we address different needs of different users, such as basic and advanced users, in the same product?

As with many conference sessions, the discussions between information providers and purchasers were enlightening even if no solutions were reached.

Content Aggregation or Disaggregation

The popular topic of "Content Buying: Content Aggregation or Disaggregation" was debated at a session sponsored by the Leadership and Management Division, Content Buying Section. A panel of publishers and content buyers looked at the future of content aggregation, trends in disaggregation, and how these issues affect purchasing decisions and usability of information.

For purposes of discussion, the terms were defined as "aggregated content" being available on multiple vendors and "disaggregated content" being available only on one vendor platform.

Some industry trends were presented as an initial starting point for the discussion:

- Pendulum has swung towards exclusivity in recent years
- 400 titles have moved into some degree of exclusivity in the past 5 years; 50% of those have moved to a single vendor situation
- In 90% of the past 25 deals, it was the publisher that sought out the exclusive deal

Publishers expressed their reasons for seeking exclusivity for their content. Content buyers expressed their issues with the move to exclusivity.

The discussion was congenial and respectful, despite the strong feelings on both sides of the question. This open dialogue resulted in a better understanding of the motivations for, and impact resulting from, the decision to move to disaggregated content.

Challenges of Buying and Selling Content in 2011

It was standing room only at another session sponsored by the Leadership and Management Division, Content Buying Section that highlighted “Challenges of Buying and Selling Content in 2011.” A panel of buyers and sellers discussed issues facing both sides of the content acquisition process in a debate style presentation that was skillfully moderated and involved the audience in the lively dialogue.

Topics and discussion ranged over a variety of hot spots in the content landscape:

- Ensuring that terms of use regarding content are respected and abided by outsourcing firms or consultants
- Vendor enhancements to their products

- Price increases
- Usage data
- Decision-making in the buying process

The moderated debate format ensured that many viewpoints were expressed, discussion was lively, and an appropriate amount of time was spent on each of the topics.

Additional details of these sessions are available on the SLA Business & Finance Division website and the SLA Leadership & Management Division website for the respective sessions.

About the Author

Valerie Ryder vryder@wolper.com is Director of Information Strategy for Wolper Subscription Services in Easton, PA. She has over 30 years of experience in managing business and research libraries in the corporate sector, has spearheaded the migration from print to electronic information resources at a Fortune 300 company and has been a solo librarian. Valerie is a member of SLA Business & Finance and Leadership & Management Divisions. She has an MLS degree from the University of Pittsburgh, a Master’s degree in International Business Management from Point Park University and a Bachelor’s degree in mathematics from the University of Rochester.

Relevant Links

SLA Business & Finance Division
[Partners’ Strategies to Lead the Way](#)

SLA Leadership & Management Division
[Content Aggregation or Disaggregation](#)
[Challenges of Buying and Selling Content in 2011](#)