Fathom this Questia: eBrary’s Time Has Come?
Access 2001
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OVERDUE
State of the Union

- Pew Internet & American Life Project study
- Surveyed teens in Nov/Dec 2000
  - 94% used Internet for school research
  - 78% say Internet helps them do homework
- Primary source for recent school project
  - 71% used Internet, 24% used Library, 4% used both
  - 11% reported primary access from school
“Students cite the ease and speed of online research as their main reasons for relying on the Web instead of the library.”

“For instantaneous help with vexing homework, online teens at times turn to friends, classmates, and teachers via instant messages or email. Forty-one percent of online teens say they use those communication tools to contact teachers or classmates about schoolwork.”
No Surprises...

- Schools are under increasing fiscal constraints
- Usually 1st thing to suffer is the Library
- Makes sense to have access at home
  - More convenient
  - Use them when want/need to
  - More efficient/effective use of some resources
- What does this mean?
Evolution, Devolution or Extinction?

- Libraries need to think about what is valued in their service and focus on it.
- Assume all students will have access from home and evolve services/resources to this model.
- Look at what eLibraries are doing – both right and wrong, and learn from their mistakes.
Libraries and eLibraries

♦ Traditional Library - *You-Come-To-Me*
  ♦ Help provided only onsite
  ♦ Assume motivated to learn Library skills
  ♦ Provide complex array of tools and resources

♦ New eLibrary - *Me-Come-To-You*
  ♦ Help provided anytime, anywhere
  ♦ Assume motivated to find something needed quick
  ♦ Provide fewer resources and simple access tools
eLibraries
For current context I define eLibraries as online services (usually commercial) that attempt to replace or augment traditional libraries.
Some eLibrary Examples

- Questia
  - Personal eLibrary targeting individual students
- eBrary
  - Institutional/commercial eLibrary using eBrary tools and resources
- Fathom
  - Online university (courses, resources)
What is Questia?

- Online Library and Writing Tool
- Designed for individual students
- Started in 2000
  - Currently in 2nd major revision
  - Content limited
  - Marketing push is current focus
Functionality

◆ Resource discovery tools
  ◆ Books and journals and reference tools (~60K items)
  ◆ Metadata and fulltext search functions

◆ Writing Tools
  ◆ Primarily research tools (editor has been removed)
  ◆ Citation, bookmarking, notes, highlighting
  ◆ Maintain projects with all above saved
What’s Good

♦ Very good/selective resource selection
♦ Books, journals and encyclopaedic resources
♦ Interface simple and easy to learn
  ♦ Citation extraction and management tools
  ♦ Good online reading tools
♦ Reasonable monthly fee for access to all
♦ Search for Islam provided current as well as classic texts on the issue
What’s Bad

◆ Journal resources are very few
◆ Restricted to information in the database
◆ Interface can be slow (initial load takes a long time and browser becomes unstable)
◆ Removed writing tool in 1st version
◆ Search for Islam returned only 13 titles, none current
What is eBrary?

♦ Set of eStuff tools and resources which are licensed by publishers/content providers
  ♦ eContent Distribution
  ♦ eBrarian, eBrarian Pro, eBrarian A+
♦ Goal is to do what Libraries do not – provide access to information for afee*
♦ Current partnership with Learning Network

*Afee - commercial information (e.g. as in a bookstore) pretending to be free (e.g. as in a library)
Functionality

- Provides content in a PDF-compliant format
- Includes fulltext and navigation features
- No cost for viewing texts online
- Copying and printing require a fee (determined by publisher) – per page
- Essentially a rights management / content distribution engine
What's Good

- Pay only for what you use (e.g. $.50 per page)
- Makes otherwise print-bound information searchable and accessible
- Can view information online for free
- Interesting way to increase sales of print books
  - “Increase sales by giving it away” technique discussed by Michael Jensen (NAP)
What's Bad

The Economics of Copy Protection in Software and Other Media

Information and know-how are perfect examples of what economists call public goods. A public good is a commodity or a service whose “consumption” by one agent does not preclude its use by other agents; the term agents here refers to consumers and firms.
Fathom is the premier destination for authenticated knowledge and online learning.

Lectures, interviews, articles, performances and exhibits

Online Courses

Knowledge Trails
What is Fathom?

◊ Partnership between 13 institutions, including University & Public libraries, museums, publisher
◊ Fathom is the online infrastructure and architecture to deliver material from members
◊ Provide some free “courses” as a teaser
◊ Course design varies, many are quite sophisticated
Functionality

- Provides complete courses as well as course material, such as course packs (Xanedu)
What’s Good

♦ Potential…

♦ Interesting design and environment with some useful tools (Notes, Dictionary, etc.)

♦ Standard interface for some courses, although others use a local system

♦ Can request notification when a course becomes available
What's Bad

- Depending on when you access it, many courses are not available (between terms, not yet created)
- In many cases, experience the same morass of in-person higher ed bureaucracy
- Many courses require print texts (buy them from Amazon or Blackwell’s)
- Little development/integration of eContent
Where Do We Go From Here?
Final Word

♦ Seems that the rush to invest in the Internet and eBooks has created some businesses without a sound grounding in reality. Enormous infrastructure in existing Universities and libraries provides much more than they can offer.

♦ Nevertheless, they do indicate the future for information access and dissemination.
What Can We Do?

- Assume all users will want to access material from home
  - Ensure acquisition and tight integration of electronic resources into Library
  - Pursue MyLibrary developments or similar projects which provide personalized resources and tools
- Market Library as the source of information, regardless of where you may be