

A SUMMARY OF PREDICTIONS*

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The Fiesole Conference participants looked into the future of collection building and management and came up with ten significant predictions. They are summarized below:

First, most of the Fiesole participants see more of the same in five years, i.e., continued and *more rapid* growth of electronic materials, primarily for informational and data sensitive materials; continued growth of consortia; more consolidation and partnering among publishers and intermediaries; more consolidation among vendors; continued attempts to resolve issues of copyright in an electronic environment; an increasing substitution of electronic formats for paper formats in serials; a continued “flood” of information; an increase in distance education; more outsourced technical services activities; continued struggles with the issue of archiving; greater dependence on Web-based services; the basic issues of securing funding, support, and providing service remaining more or less unchanged; a continued search for standards; more information tailored for the user; and a continued role for books, albeit a smaller role.

Libraries in five years will continue to have a major role as gatekeepers, archivists, and equalizers of information for the rich and poor. Libraries will be more entrepreneurial. There will be a greater need for librarians as filterers or navigators of electronic information. There will be more virtual libraries.

Second, many libraries will be spending more on staff and less on collections because the demands of electronic materials require intermediation. Use of public libraries will increase, but academic libraries will see more remote users.

Third, it is unlikely that publishers will provide archiving of electronic materials. The library community as a whole will need to concern itself with the issue of archiving before materials are lost. There need to be consortial solutions to this problem. Unfortunately, there is a tendency to believe that the problem will resolve itself. There is a need for leadership in this area. Perhaps ARL, OCLC, the Center for Research Libraries or a similarly large organization can take the leadership.

Fourth, as funds shrink due to demands of electronic publications and continued inflation, libraries will need to move to centers of excellence. Perhaps there will be a national storage center or regional libraries of last resort.

Fifth, another trend is definitely a growing number of consortia. These consortia will often be statewide such as the Ohiolink. Publishers and vendors will not sell their products directly as they have in the past, but rather will sell to consortia.

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Sixth, some believe that people won't go to libraries to use them, and others see libraries as cultural centers where students will gather to access information. Public libraries will continue to see a rise in use as they provide electronic services to the public.

Seventh, librarians will provide a number of alternatives to expensive journals such as SPARC or certain disciplines will have electronic databases which will provide full service. In some cases, non-profit publishers will provide this service and, in other cases, academic institutions will provide it. Publishers will still offer the value-added editorial and distribution services, and will continue to dominate in distribution of information. It is not clear whether a national electronic article database will work, especially since scholarly information is not produced just in the United States. In any case, the face of publishing will change.

Eighth, higher educational institutions will have changed demographics: more minorities, more international students; more females, and more older students.

Ninth, a major role of universities will be to develop critical thinking skills, especially information literacy, i.e., the skills to cope with the expanding electronic information universe.

Tenth, users will want 24-hour access to information and they will not be interested in how this information is provided.

The above conclusions were reached and many other interesting developments were discussed in this three-day retreat in Fiesole. There will be a need for libraries and librarians to adapt to change more rapidly. It is certainly clear that the pace of change continues to accelerate.