

Welcome to the Fiesole Retreat 2016, by Josep Torn, Library Director of the EUI.

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1. Welcome

Dear delegates, be really welcome to the Fiesole Retreat 2016.

It is a pleasure to welcome you to the 18th edition of these conferences.

I hope that those of you who visited yesterday the Badia (the Abbey) of the European University Institute enjoyed our reception and tour of the Library, as I'm sure that you enjoyed and will enjoy Fiesole too.

As library director is a luxury to be part of the Fiesole Retreat, this is my first edition. And I'm sure that I will learn a lot about the main topics that we will talk about (actually we started yesterday).

In the preconference we started with very interesting presentations on e-books, from different perspectives, today and tomorrow we will continue talking about e-books, but also about data management, reputation, discovery tools...

You can imagine that as a library director I'm not an expert in any of them.

But to highlight the importance of a meeting, a forum like that -like the Fiesole Retreat-, I will refer to one of them, very briefly, and taking the European University Institute as example. I just want to share with you my concerns, my tribulations about e-Books.

I should add that we, the EUI Library, are a team with very high skilled librarians, so my tribulations are not so big, or at least they are shared with real experts.

2. eBooks and *the change of paradigm*

So, from my point of view:

The transformation of the book, the traditional book, into the e-book –whatever the format it is- it is not just an adjustment of the market. It is not a simple upgrade of the book industry to adapt it to new technology possibilities to keep going the same way it has gone before but somehow better.

It's very worn out to use the expression *change of paradigm*, but I think that it fits very good here and I will try to explain, in 5 minutes which are these implications for the EUI Library... as I think that they will be much the same for several university libraries around.

We are facing a change of paradigm; all the agents involved in the field of the book and information industry; publishers, scholars, reviewers, libraries, etc.

As I'm not an expert in the private or corporate sector, sure I'm not the right person to make a good analysis of the impact, the change, the shift... that the e-book is having from the publishers' perspective.

But just thinking of companies like Amazon, projects like Google Books or some other similar (that we talked yesterday) we can have an idea of how big is the impact for the industry.

Now, as a librarian, and as I have the floor, I would like to share with you some thoughts, very briefly, of why this change is for me a change of paradigm and what worries me as library director of what the near future can mean for us, the libraries. And in that field (libraries) I guess I can be more concrete.

The value chain of a library (as a service, not as a collection), traditionally, was as easy as:

- Acquiring (so, owing) a copy of a book, coming from the publishers (basically)
- And offer it for multiple times (infinite... until the copy got destroyed if possible), to the users.

One copy – hundreds of loans.

With the e-book collections (as we should have figured out after the change of the journals into e-journals) the chain is different:

- One... [not a copy]... one contract to have access?
- Multiple final users accesses.

The key issue is not the format itself, but the property and/or the access to the collections.

The format it's not a change of paradigm by itself.

I hear librarians and university managers talking about skills (information literacy, ICT skills, how important they are, how challenging they are... how this need of skills are changing the librarians, our role, our job...)

I haven't already met in my life (28 years in academic libraries) any single librarian who doesn't understand, doesn't know how to manage, doesn't take advantage of, etc. any electronic collection they have access to. Journals, books... law, patents, videos... it doesn't matter.

Formats (technology)... this is not the main issue.

3. The EUI Library

Let me try to explain what we do at the EUI very basically. We have a team of *information specialists*, one for every discipline of research at the EUI: Sociology and Political Science, Economy, Law, History and European integration. These information specialists are high skilled professionals in their disciplines.

They, with the help of an excellent team of librarians, have built: by selecting books, journals, other documents, by understanding our academics' specific fields, by updating themselves with the new items and collections available in the market... a unique collection of 500.000 books.

Some items are the same that you can find in other institutions. The collection as a whole is part of the EUI core. It's a representation of what we are, what we have been, what the institute has become as a living organization.

Someone cannot understand what we are by taking one single book from our shelves. But you can understand what we are, what the EUI is, by considering our collection as a living creature. As well as studying a molecule of water (H₂O) we cannot understand a river or a sea.

4. The discussion

So, what will happen if the Library does not owe the collections from now on?
But gives access to third parties (publishers, providers, aggregators) collections?

What are we really building? A fleeting picture of the moment based on the aim of the provider more than the aim of the institution?

I do not resist disappearing, if we are not worth in this value chain. We have to add some value for the final user. If we do not... no resistance to disappear.

Publishers, fortunately, work in a free market. Their business models are result of their liberty to shift in the market. Their offer to the libraries is also a result of this freedom.

Universities, research centers, academic institutions... we are founded on top of these principles of freedom and liberty too. What we teach, the fields in which we research, the scientific methodologies we apply... are a result of our freedom.

We libraries should be free to build our collections, paper or electronic, with this liberty too.

There are two main threats, as a result of how the business models of the academic book industry are developing:

1st. If Libraries *rent* books instead of *acquire* books, we will be a mere intermediary. In the long term we will almost disappear and nothing will be built, created from the academic side.

2nd. If we acquire *packages* instead of *individual* books... Even more, if we acquire *big, huge packages* instead of individual titles (because some firms are getting bigger and bigger and collections offered are bigger and bigger too), we will become streams flowing under control.

5. The Fiesole Retreat.

So then, why it is important a forum like the Fiesole Retreat for us, in the field of the eBooks and in some others?

- Because this is not a meeting between librarians... where we invite providers for commercial presentations, too. And we offer them the possibility to give us a presentation in the commercial panel while we go for a coffee. And then we complain about the publishers once you are not around.
- Not a meeting between publishers or a fair of the publishing industry, where maybe a librarian is invited to give a speech or to meet with them.
- Not a meeting between other agents of the information or book industry.

But a meeting with all of them, all together where we have the opportunity to talk, discuss between us and try to understand all the parts, that we are not always rowing in the same direction.

Please enjoy the Fiesole Retreat!

Thank you!