Softlink International Realigns its Forces

Softlink International, a global company that produces the Liberty and Oliver library automation systems, has made a number of noteworthy changes over the last year. They have installed a new CEO for the global company and new management at their US subsidiary, and have incorporated a major independent distributor into the parent company.

Softlink International reports that its software finds use in over 10,000 libraries spanning 108 countries, making it a key player in the library software world. The company offers library automation products for school, corporate, academic, and public libraries. In the United States Softlink has not gained wide adoption in large public or academic libraries, but has a substantial presence in school and corporate libraries.

Softlink International (the Softlink parent company) came under new management with the appointment of Kim Duffy as CEO in August 2008. Duffy's entry follows the retirement of Bob Dune who had served as CEO since 2000. John Duffy, who founded Softlink in 1983, served as CEO through 2000. John Dunne returned as Chief Information Officer in June 2007 and currently serves the company in a consulting role. Another management change for the global company involves appointment of Nathan Godfrey, who formerly served as the company's Chief Financial Officer, to the position of Chief Operating Officer for Softlink International. In April 2009, Hillary Noye was appointed as Director of Business Development Asia and Pacific for Softlink International. Noye, like Duffy, comes to Softlink from ISS.

The appointment of Duffy represents a transition from 25 years of continuous leadership by the two brothers that founded the company to an era with a chief executive who brings different experience and a new perspective. Duffy comes to Softlink as a seasoned executive of high-tech companies, including Australasia Internet Security Systems (ISS Australasia), where he served as Managing Director. Other previous posts include a stint as CEO of Indus International. Under the administration of Kim Duffy, the company has begun a new business strategy aimed at growing the company.

A Major transition for Softlink Europe

Another recent transition for Softlink involves the acquisition of one of its largest independent distributors, the one that represents its interests in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa (EMEA). Effective December 2008, Softlink Europe operates as a wholly owned subsidiary of Softlink International (note: this change was not announced until May 2009). Prior to the acquisition, Softlink International was one of a group of investors in Softlink Europe. Having purchased the shares of outside investors, Softlink International now gains full control. No major operational changes have been announced. Alasdair Darroch, Managing Director since the company's founding in 1992, and Iain Dunbar, Operations Director since 1995, continue their leadership roles for Softlink Europe overseeing the company's EMEA operations. Softlink Europe is based in Oxford, UK.

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Softlink Europe has had a history of steady growth since its founding in 1992. It provides its own support and sales operations and works through a number of agents throughout the region.

New Management at Softlink America

Softlink entered the United States market in 1993 with the establishment of Softlink America as a wholly owned subsidiary. Softlink America is headquartered in Denver, CO. Robert Corrao became President of this business unit in May 2004, when its headquarters moved to Los Angles. In September 2008, the division shifted its main office to Seattle, WA.

In the United States, Softlink has its strongest presence in the corporate and special library sector, with about half of the sales of its Liberty software going to US libraries. A small percentage of new sales of Oliver, geared more towards school libraries, have been to American customers.

In June 2009 Robert Corrao resigned from Softlink America to become Chief Operating Officer of Library Associates Companies (LAC), a major recruiting and consulting firm for libraries.

Catherine Leonard, manager of the company's Pacific division in New Zealand, has been appointed as General Manager of Softlink America. She will relocate to manage Softlink America from its Seattle office. This unit had previously been managed from an office in Los Angeles. Softlink America has been especially successful in the special library arena; Leonard will continue to pursue that focus and bring her successful marketing experience into the school libraries of New Zealand to help expand Softlink's presence in the school sector.

Softlink's Products

Softlink has developed a succession of successful library automation products since its founding.

Development of the company's original product, a library automation system called ALARM, began when the company was founded in 1983. ALARM was introduced in 1985. The next-generation of its library automation system, called OASIS, was released in 1988, initially targeting the Australian school library market. Softlink OASIS grew to dominate the Australian school library market and the company soon found success in other countries and regions. This software was marketed under different names in different regions; it was marketed as Alice for DOS in Europe, as Annie in the United States, and by EMBLA in Iceland. Beginning in about 1995, the software was migrated to Microsoft Windows. More recently, Softlink has focused on its new Web-based library automation systems. Oliver, designed for school libraries and resource centers, and Liberty for corporate, special, and public libraries.

Softlink International, one of the venerable companies of the international library automation arena, seems poised to further strengthen its position. New management in both its global operations and its US-based division seem to represent a positioning of the company for expansion and amplified marketing of its products regionally and globally. The acquisition of its European subsidiary ensures alignment of its strategies worldwide. This company has long been an important presence in the library automation economy. Now more than ever, Softlink International is a company to watch as the library automation industry continues to reshape itself.

—Marshall Breeding

Territory	Agent
France	Softlink France
Ireland	Interleaf Technology
Kenya	CoreTech Systems and Solutions
Mauritius	Libtech Co Ltd.
Nigeria	Library and Information Support Services
South Africa (Secondary Schools)	Julie Engenrieder
South Africa (Junior and Preparatory Schools)	Pam Nicolaides
Uganda	Planet Systems Ltd.
Zimbabwe	Library Support Systems
Israel	Yanshuff Knowledge and Libraries Management

Open Book Alliance

The director of the Imperial War Museum once noted that the name of that august institution has the misfortune of containing two if not three words that often make people cringe. The Open Book Alliance (OBA), announced in late August, cleared that initial naming hurdle with three very embraceable words, though many would argue that the naming bar is set pretty low these days. OBA entered a rancorous fray over the future of the book and its role in reading, and was promptly slammed by some commentators and bloggers who suggested that it contains organizational members eating sour grapes and grinding axes. It may be difficult to maintain a positive spirit during this ongoing donnybrook.

As a watchdog group, OBA's goal is to counterbalance the negative aspects of commercial mass digitization book scanning projects, especially Google Book Search and the proposed Google Books Settlement in particular. According to the second and final paragraph of OBA's mission statement:

> "The Open Book Alliance will counter Google, the Association of American Publishers and the Authors' Guild's scheme to monopolize the access, distribution and pricing of the largest digital database of books in the world. To this end, we will promote fair and flexible solutions aimed at achieving a more robust and open system."

The leaders of the OBA are Peter Brantley, Director of the Bookserver Project at the Internet Archive and formerly Director of the Digital Library Federation, and Gary Reback, an attorney in the Litigation Practice Group of Carr & Farrell. Reback specializes in intellectual property and trade regulation litigation.

According to the bio blurb on the project website, Reback "is generally credited with spearheading the efforts leading to the U.S. Government's prosecution of Microsoft."

The charter organizational members of OBA include some strange bedfellows—major corporations—Microsoft, which must have forgiven Reback, Amazon, and Yahoo!. Additional members are AAP and the Authors' Guild—publishing groups (American Society of Journalists and Authors, Council of Literary Magazines and Presses, and Small Press Distribution), a couple of library associations (Special Libraries Association and the New York Library Association), and the Internet Archive.

What are the smooth stones that David will use to fight Goliath? Information objects and arguments, of course. OBA has collected some information resources (court documents, articles, videos, quotes and other media) about the proposed Google Books Settlement, and has begun disseminating its own documents, such as "The Proposed Google Book Search Settlement: Fact vs. Fiction," and blog posts. The OBA website even contains a cautionary quote from Paul Courant, Dean of Libraries at the University of Michigan, the first research library to sign on to the Google mass digitization project. Strange bedfellows may become even stranger bedfellows.

In the long blog post that coincided with the launch of OBA, Brantley and Reback state that OBA's mission is to:

> "…insist that any mass book digitization and distribution effort be open and competitive. It must be undertaken in the open, grounded in sound public policy, and mindful of the need to promote long-term benefits for consumers rather than isolated commercial interests."

While the OBA seems to have formed in direct response to the troubling aspects of a proposed settlement, the organization and other observers see many larger, long-term issues and potential side effects lurking beneath the details in the 300-page proposed settlement. Again, quoting the long inaugural blog post:

> "Many startling challenges to copyright and competition policy lie buried in the settlement's 300+ pages. The Open Book Alliance will inform policymakers and the public about the serious legal, competitive, and policy issues in the settlement proposal…"

For years the common belief has held that the pen is mightier than the sword. The question of the hour is: Is the pen mightier than a mass digitization blitzkrieg?

Fasten your seatbelts. This is going to be a bumpy ride. The tag phrase of the Imperial War Museum—"War shapes lives"—is hauntingly true. I wonder if there is a quote in the Imperial War Museum about how innocent civilians—in this instance, readers—suffer mightily during wartime.

—*Tom Peters*

More Info. @:
http://www.iwm.org.uk/
http://www.openbookalliance.org
http://www.openbookalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/08/Google-Book-Settlement-Fact-and-Fiction.pdf

How Green Is Your Reader?

When people bring up the topic of librarianship and the environmental movement, perhaps most people initially think about the idea of making library buildings more energy efficient through renovation or new building construction. Few may consider that the process of making, distributing, obtaining and reading books, articles and other documents also impacts several significant environmental issues. Could sitting in an easy chair reading a good printed book be as environmentally egregious as a throwaway drive-through trip to a fast food restaurant? A recent research report states that reading on a portable electronic reading device may be much greener than reading print on paper.

In August, the Cleantech Group released a report, *The Environmental Impact of Amazon's Kindle,* that suggested that while e-reader sales have been too small (to date) to have much impact on the environment for good or ill, if sales take off as some have predicted, they could have a very positive environmental impact, assuming that the manufacture and use of printed books decreases commensurately.

The report notes that the carbon emitted in the lifecycle of an Amazon Kindle, which currently holds a 45 percent share of the portable e-reader market in the U.S, is fully offset after the first year of use. "Any additional years of use result in net carbon savings, equivalent to an average of 168 kg of CO_2 per year (the emissions produced in the manufacture and distribution of 22.5 books)."

The problem is that the manufacture and distribution of printed books as currently practiced is not particularly environmentally friendly. An August 31, 2009 New York Times blog post by Joe Hutsko quotes the Cleantech Group's assertion that the publishing industry is one of the most polluting industrial sectors. Hutsko notes that the report, which unfortunately is not available free of charge to the general public, asserts that books printed on paper "have the highest per-unit carbon footprint—which includes its raw materials, paper production, printing, shipping, and disposal—in the publishing sector."

This is a dirty little secret to which libraries, bookstores, and staunch defenders of reading print on paper as the only true form of reading do not like attention to be drawn.

Hutsko, who apparently had access to the full report, notes that, "The Cleantech study concluded that purchasing three e-books per month for four years produces roughly 168 kilograms of CO_2 throughout the Kindle's lifecycle, compared to the estimated 1,074 kilograms of CO_2 produced by the same number of printed books."

Portable electronic devices such as e-readers have their own environmental pitfalls. Many contain toxic and hazardous materials, the devices can be difficult to effectively recycle, and, if placed in landfills, do not biodegrade well. Also, the average lifecycle of a portable e-reader device may be substantially shorter that the average lifecycle of a printed book. Nevertheless, if e-readers are widely adopted and printed books wane, the net environmental effect could be significantly positive.

The press release about the report cautions that the potential positive impact of e-readers on the overall environment remains largely pure potential at this point. The report notes that the publishing industry needs to put standards in place to help speed the adoption and diffusion of e-reading technology. The report also encourages schools and academic institutions to pick up the pace of testing portable e-reading devices as replacements for physical textbooks.

—*Tom Peters*

More Info. @:

http://cleantech.com/news/4867/cleantech-group-finds-positive-envi

http://greeninc.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/08/31/are-e-readers-greener-than-books/

E-textbooks at Northwest Missouri State University

On August 26, 2009, EduCause sponsored a webinar featuring two academics from Northwest Missouri State University, Dr. Jon T. Rickman, the VP for Information Systems, and Dr. Roger Von Holzen, the director of the Center for Information Technology in Education. During the event, they discussed the ongoing e-textbook initiatives at their institution. Approximately 300 people attended the live online webinar. Northwest Missouri State, which has 7,000 students, may be the leading academic institution in the U.S. in terms of transitioning from printed textbooks to portable e-textbooks. Other universities, such as Penn State University and the University of Texas at Austin, also are experimenting with e-textbooks.

Northwest Missouri State University has been providing rented textbooks to its students for over a century. For the past few years they have rented laptop computers to their students, as well. Rickman and Von Holzen noted that the university charges students about $360 per year for the rental of a wireless notebook computer, plus about $180 for the rental of textbooks.

During the first phase of the e-textbook trials during the fall semester of 2008, Northwest tried the Sony Reader with a 6-inch diagonal screen. They discovered that college students do indeed love small electronic devices, including the Sony Reader. The E-Ink display of the Sony Reader was well-accepted by the students.

However, the Sony Reader also had some serious limitations when deployed and used in this context. The PDF files upon which most of the textbooks were delivered did not work well in undergraduate and graduate teaching and learning situations—the files were too inflexible and static. Rickman and Von Holzen reported that most college students want enhanced, interactive e-textbooks that are much more than just the printed textbook format made digital. Students also want to do traditional things with textbooks, such as highlight key points and write in the margins. Rickman and Von Holzen think that the ePub format will work much better than PDF for college-level e-textbooks.

Most college students want enhanced, interactive e-textbooks that are much more than just the printed textbook format made digital.

Because of the shortcomings of the Sony Reader option, during Phase II in the spring semester of 2009, Northwest switched and began delivering its e-textbooks to laptop computers. The students were already receiving the laptops as standard issue when they matriculated, and they already carry and use them in classrooms, residence halls, labs, and the library. The more powerful laptop computers enabled the integration of various services and information resources, including e-textbooks, the course management system used on campus, email, and the Web. Rickman predicted that portable e-reader devices and netbook computers will merge into a single device. For him, the ideal device for this use would be a table device with rich and robust e-reading features.

During these test phases Northwest Missouri State University has been using VitalSource as its source and delivery platform for the e-textbooks. Currently the cost per read is higher for e-textbooks than for printed textbooks, and publishers have not permitted the reselling of e-textbooks. The presenters noted that publishers are learning that they can exercise more control of the use of e-textbooks.

The presenters also noted that the campus textbook and e-textbook service is a separate operation from the university library. To date the library has not been a major participant in these trials and tests, which I think is unfortunate. While most academic libraries do not consider textbooks as a core collection development and management responsibility, the practical lessons learned from these phases of development eventually will have a major impact on how core library content and services are delivered to students, faculty, and staff.

—*Tom Peters*

More Info. @:
Presentation Slides (7.4 MB):
www.educause.edu/ir/library/powerpoint/LIVE0915.ppt
http://textbooks.vitalsource.com/

# Wikipedia Limits Edits on the Living

The popularity and use of Wikipedia as a reference resource is a divisive issue in librarianship, education, and publishing. Some people refuse to use Wikipedia or accept a citation from a Wikipedia article, while others see it as just another reference tool with its own set of strengths and weaknesses. For some people, one particularly galling aspect of Wikipedia and wikis in general is that, at least in theory, anyone can write and edit anything in them. This has resulted in famous instances of error, competing edits and re-edits from factions on an issue, premature reports of deaths of famous people, and many other faulty claims of "facts".

Recently Wikipedia took a step away from the pure, platonic ideal of a wiki and a step toward the more traditional practices of online reference resources. It began limiting the ability of individuals to edit entries about living people, restricting the privilege to experienced volunteer editors. Any edits about living people submitted by the great unwashed volunteer editors will now be flagged for careful review. This editorial change applies only to the English language version, but it already has been implemented to all suggested editorial changes in the German language version.

Noam Cohen's August 24th *New York Times* article about this editorial about-face noted that Wikipedia's "freewheeling ethos is about to be curbed." It may also signal that Wikipedia is becoming part of the publishing establishment and less connected the upstart radical Web 2.0 fringe. Success affects and transforms corporate entities, not-for-profit initiatives and individuals in subtle ways. As Cohen writes, "The change is part of a growing realization on the part of Wikipedia's leaders that as the site grows more influential, they must transform its embrace-the-chaos culture into something more mature and dependable." Many librarians are probably thankful for this step toward more maturity and dependability. As the saying goes, if you can't beat them, change them.

Wikipedia has become hugely popular. It is one of the top ten most-visited websites. Cohen reports that 60 million Americans visit Wikipedia each month. Within 24 hours after reports of Michael Jackson's death, more than 3 million people accessed the Wikipedia article on him.
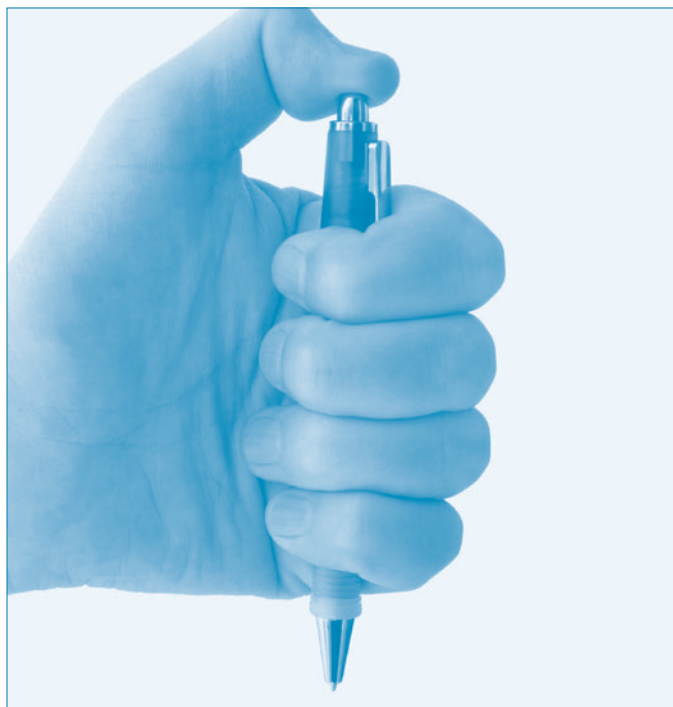
> **It is too soon to tell what major, long-term impact—if any—this editorial decision will have on Wikipedia and wikis in general.**

It is too soon to tell what major, long-term impact—if any—this editorial decision will have on Wikipedia, wikis in general, and perhaps even the explosive practice of allowing anyone and everyone to comment, tag, create, and share content with little or no editorial control. Will Wikipedia begin acting like a major publisher in other regards? Will they become reluctant to take a chance on a new author and new content? Cohen reports on research being conducted by Ed H. Chi of the Palo Alto Research Center, who studied millions of Wikipedia edits. Chi's report concludes that there was "growing resistance from the Wikipedia community [of experienced editors] to new content."

—Tom Peters

More Info. @:

http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/25/technology/
   internet/25wikipedia.html?th&emc=th
   (free subscription required)

New Options for Koha Support

One of the benefits cited by many libraries using an open source ILS is that they are not tied to a single organization for support services, hosting, and development. We have previously provided coverage of LibLime's role as the first commercial company in the United States to provide support for an open source ILS. LibLime has been providing support for Koha since early 2005 and continues as the dominant Koha service provider.

Over time, a number of other firms have began providing services to help libraries implement and maintain Koha, both within the United States and internationally. These companies operate both cooperatively and competitively. They cooperate in the development of the Koha software upon which they all depend, and they compete to gain the business of libraries for support services.

Until the last year or so, there were multiple companies involved in Koha, but each operated in a different country or region. More recently, competition has increased as multiple companies operate within the same region. This group now includes small firms as well as larger companies that have launched business units that provide support for Koha and other open source library software.

PTFS, Inc. has been providing support for library software since 1995. They have developed a commercial digital archiving product called Archivalware. The company also has extensive experience with library automation software. Beginning in 2001 PTFS served as a reseller for Ex Libris ALEPH and other products. A number of their clients are federal government libraries, but the company works with libraries of all types. PTFS has recently expanded its scope to include

support services for Kohl (See: koha .ptfs.com).

ByWater Solutions, a small consulting company with offices in Santa Barbara, CA and West Haven, CT, has been offering services for Koha since early 2009. Brendan A. Gallagher serves as the firm's CEO. In addition to offering direct support for libraries using Koha, ByWater works in partnership with other open source companies like Equinix Software. (http://bywatersolutions.com).

BibLibre has been providing support for Koha as a company since 2007, though its founder has been involved in Koha development since 2001. Individuals associated with BibLibre have been major contributors to Koha's codebase and provide support services to libraries primarily in France. (See: http://www. biblibre.com/).

Catalyst IT Limited, a large New Zealand company specializing in open source technologies, began offering Koha support in mid-2009. Chris Cormack, one of the original developers of Koha at Katipo Communications, leads the company's involvement with Koha. SLN

reported in its April 2007 issue that LibLime acquired the Koha division of Katipo Communications, the consulting firm that originally created Koha. LibLime's involvement in New Zealand was short lived, and the office was disbanded in February 2008. (http://www.catalyst .net.nz).

This article lists those with a US presence and some of those associated with the key Koha developers. A more complete list of firms offering support services for Koha is available on the official Koha web site (http://koha.org/support/pay-for -support).

With the ever growing adoption of Koha domestically and worldwide, there are many complexities regarding coordination of software development, documentation, ownership of intellectual property assets like trademarks, domain names, and copyrights. These issues have been of concern in recent months and an effort is underway to establish a more coordinated model of governance, including the establishment of a nonprofit, independent foundation. Most large-scale open source software projects rely on independent foundations for governance; examples include the Apache Software Foundation, and the Kuali Foundation.

The number of libraries adopting Koha and Evergreen as their primary automation software continues to increase. Growing pains for the software and the companies involved are expected. Many libraries stand to benefit from increased competition and more objective governance of this open source software project.

—Marshall Breeding

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