

Libraries and Google®, ed. William Miller and Rita M. Pellen. New York: Haworth Information Press, 2005. 240p. \$24.95 (paperback) (ISBN: 0-7890-3125-6)

Reading this title in 2007, although this is less than two years after most of the contributions were written, provides a clear demonstration of the lifecycle of the havoc wrought by transformative technologies, which Google and its various products inarguably are. While the essays themselves are, for the most part, clearly children of the boom in Google bashing and, yes, Google loving that ensued after the announcements of Google Scholar and Google Print in 2004, the intervening two years have brought about some degree of predictable stasis: the action and reaction have passed, leaving those on all sides to get on with their work. It's not that Scholar and Book Search (as Print is now known) are now without their critics, flaws, and pains—nothing could be further from the truth—but that the machinations of larger forces—publishers, copyright law, technical limitations, and our own inherent self-calming tendencies—have moved us past the hype into a more sober reality.

In this tome, which can perhaps best be read as a synopsis of that moment two years ago, the reader who distrusts and fears Google will find some comfort among kindred souls, as will those who love all things Google. Those who are largely ambivalent—which should not be confused with oblivious—toward Google will wonder what all the fuss is/was about.

Many of the articles reflect the tone set in the introduction, which Miller concludes with the grave remark that we may be “done in” by the Google phenomenon if we do not adapt to it and “rethink our relationship with our users.” (p. 4) This is wise counsel, but a number of the pieces employ hyperbolic and vaguely apocalyptic formulations, such as “[f]or libraries in the 21st century, the situation is dire,” and there are plenty of allusions to David/Goliath struggles, manning the ramparts, sounding alarms, and so forth. Some of the best contributions, notably those by Mark Sandler and Maurice York, remain deftly above the polemic fray and delve into productive examinations of how libraries can work with and around Google.

Analyses of Google Scholar abound, setting it against a set of other library resources such as catalogs and licensed databases. While these show that Google Scholar has many flaws and lacks some of the features deemed essential that are inherent to traditional library tools, some of the testers as well as other writers in the volume note that the performance of Scholar matters little, since users have clearly demonstrated a preference for the interfaces and simplicity of Google tools. As Ron Force notes in his piece, Google’s image is perhaps its greatest asset, and fighting that seems quixotic at best.

While the focus centers around Google Scholar and Google Print—a given considering the moment in which the volume was conceived—a significant number of pieces do engage other Google services and technologies, some delving into fairly technical analyses. Ranging from reports on tests with Google

Search Appliances to a primer on presenting one's own content coherently in Google, these offer grounded and useful information for those librarians with an interest in exploring these avenues. Many of Google's recent innovations were still in development when the writers set to their tasks, yet the more prescient among the writers touch on services such as gmail, Google Maps, and others, correctly pointing out that Google will hardly stop with Scholar and Print when it comes to dropping technology bombshells.

Somewhat short shrift is given to the work being done in libraries—which began before 2005—to integrate Google services into library tools and vice versa using Web services. While the ability to add a link resolver to Google Scholar is off-mentioned, the only library-developed tool mentioned is WAG the Dog. While the question of whether and how to include Google Scholar among a library's database offerings is a topic that arises in many pieces, the more sophisticated uses of Google via its various APIs is mentioned only in rare instances.

If one seeks a review of the discussions that erupted after the launch of Google Scholar and Google Print, then this title is to be recommended. Since we are now at a very different place in 2007—where Google is making slow and steady progress with book scanning, signing on an ever-expanding pool of libraries—the dire prognostications that appear in many of the essays already seem a bit dated. While some essays remain relevant, such as Sandler's balanced approach to formulating one's response to the challenges posed by a massive

corporate undertaking, overall the volume evinces the weaknesses attributed to technically oriented books of many stripes, namely, that they are outdated when they leave the press. Given the incredible amount of coverage and discussion Google continues to generate, there are ample sources for more contemporary discussions.

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