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Conference Report on: "Is the Journal Dead? Possible Futures for Serial Scholarship" by Rick Anderson, University of Utah

Reported by Andrea A. Leonard

Rick Anderson, Associate Dean for Scholarly Resources and Collections at the University of Utah's Marriott Library, delivered a challenging presentation that raised exciting, though uncomfortable, possibilities and questions about the future of journals and scholarly communication. Using examples such as the speedy finding of an image of Sartre that resembles his dog or asking Siri on his iPhone a reference question, Anderson drove home the point that the world of searching, retrieving, and publishing, and even the basic concept of a collection, is in flux and on the verge of radical transformation. Declaring that librarians should fear this revolution, yet publishers should rejoice, Anderson outlined the pressure points that the old scholarly communications model cannot sustain: a saturated market with more and more articles being published, most libraries with diminishing purchasing power, the waste when libraries purchase resources people don't want or need, a growing amount of readily available research data, an increasing push for Open Access mandates, and resulting challenges to copyright laws. Examples of potential upheavals in copyright law are being played out, Anderson explained, in cases such as the Google Books infringement, HathiTrust and orphan works, and the Georgia State ruling on fair use.

The e-journal ground has softened, Anderson pointed out, such that librarians can take and already have taken risks, such as questioning the Big Deals, moving to PDA/POD, and supporting the Open Access movement. Anderson exhorted us to think about what kind of organization we want to be as libraries – will we have a part in the change or will we let it happen to us? Do journals and books as formats matter anymore considering the development of "flow sites," which could replace journals and books with dynamic online content? Such sites have the advantage of being fluid and current, but could cripple librarians' concept of version of a record. Dynamic online content is a huge advantage for researchers, but will libraries be needed anymore? Students think about articles, not journals, and the concept of serials in general is disappearing.

Anderson warned us that the work of serialists will be quite different in the future and that NASIG as an organization will be not be the same. In order to move forward, we must think of how we can be useful in this transformation, rather than clinging to our current identities and workflow models as serialists or librarians. However, Anderson emphasized that the future will be "cool, exciting, incredibly useful and productive, but difficult to manage." Will we step up and be a part of this transformation or will we be running to catch up?