

Book Review: Electronic Resources in the Virtual Learning Environment: a Guide for Librarians

Jane Secker. Oxford: Chandos Publishing, 2004 ISBN: 1-84334-059-3

The author of this readable and concise book is based at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) and has a great deal of experience supporting her academic community in the development and use of Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) and digital course-packs (sometimes called electronic reserves). The author's involvement with the Copyright Licensing Agency (CLA) and the HERON service further enable her to offer expert opinion and advice in this growing and sometimes complex area of information work.

The book addresses the operational aspects that need to be considered by a library and information service when supporting this demanding area. It helps to strengthen the case for allocating resources to this area and works well as a clear, practical guide for UK librarians. This is a timely publication since academic institutions are focusing more and more attention on this area of service delivery and I would warmly recommend the book to any information professional working within the field of e-resources.

The opening chapters of the book work as a really good overview of e-resources in general, setting out the broader contexts, giving information about the development of the digital library and its relationship with information literacy and e-learning up to the present.

Following the introductory chapters come the real meat and potatoes of this book, with details about the way copyright and licensing should be handled in relation to digital texts. The author gives sound advice on how to go about obtaining copyright clearance, whether your service has decided to use the HERON approach or to "go it alone" (dealing directly with content providers).

Also covered are the relevant technical standards, specifications and methods of access management for e-resources in general and with specific reference to VLEs and digital course-pack management. Even though the book was published before the finalisation and release of the recent CLA HE Trial Licence (sometimes referred to as the Digitisation Licence), the advice offered is very relevant to the terms of that licence. While it works well as a whole, the book also operates as a useful reference tool. It is easy to dip into, with each chapter being relatively self-contained, with its own conclusion, notes and references.

There are some valuable extras, for instance the use of case studies and practical examples, which help to liven up what could be a very dry topic and which also serve to give the book a solid grounding in real experience. A particularly useful extra is the inclusion of two sample letters in the appendices – one to be used for requesting permission to download material from websites and the other to request permission from publishers to use printed materials.

The book will work equally well for those who are just starting out and those with more experience in this area. The book will be an excellent primer for the less experienced reader, and the author gives additional guidance through the provision of links to online glossaries and a list of commonly used abbreviations. For those with more experience, there will be much that is familiar here but the book is a great confidence-booster, helping

to confirm that you are taking a sound approach and acting as a checklist of the core areas that need to be addressed. All in all this is an excellent, well-presented and easy to use text.

Russell Burke, Electronic Resources Co-ordinator, ISS - Information Resources, King's College London

Press Releases & News

SAGE signs agreements with CLOCKSS and Portico to Preserve E-Journal Content

As a publisher of over 400 scholarly journals, SAGE Publications is committed to ensuring the long-term stability of its valuable journal content so future generations of scholars, researchers and student will always have access to it. In order to accomplish this goal, SAGE is participating in CLOCKSS (Controlled LOCKSS Lots of Copies Keep Stuff Safe) and has signed an agreement with Portico, a new, not-for-profit electronic-archiving service launched last year.

In the event of a disaster that would prevent the delivery of content, CLOCKSS will assure that access to the journals is maintained. A joint advisory board, made up of societies, publishers and libraries, will determine if the content is orphaned and whether it should be made publicly available. Since it's collectively managed, publishers are assured that content is controlled and no one entity has authority over orphaned digital materials in the system. During the two-year pilot, participants will collect and analyze data for use in developing a proposal for a full-scale archiving model. As part of a longer-term strategy to permanently preserve published work, CLOCKSS will report the results to the research community and begin a dialogue about a global infrastructure to ensure preservation of all past, present, and future scholarly content.

Portico will provide an ongoing, permanent online archive of SAGE journals, ensuring that an accessible copy of each issue will exist for decades to come. The service also offers the migration of the content into future technological formats as they are developed. Portico's archiving service meets library demand for a trusted, third-party archive and perpetual access while providing SAGE with insurance against loss of the journal content. "It's important that SAGE preserves our content using a variety of archiving solutions", commented Alison Mudditt, Executive Vice President of SAGE's Higher Education Group. We're pleased to add both CLOCKSS and Portico's specialized service to our other archiving agreement with the KB (Koninklijke Bibliotheek, the National Library of the Netherlands) ensuring that access to our journals is not only protected indefinitely, but will still be accessible as future technologies are developed.

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