

OCLC and WorldCat

***Consolidation and Monopolization** of a Core Library Service*

The Master Switch

Tim Wu, 2010

Breakthrough

Proliferation

Consolidation

Protection

The Master Switch

Tim Wu, 2010

Disruptive Technology Appears

Use antennas to
capture broadcast
signals and send
them to houses over
coaxial cable

Ubiquity

Residences in cities
ditch their rabbit ears
and get the cable
company to deliver
television channels to
their homes

One of us

New content providers
distribute content over
cable only

Premium cable companies
appear

Companies
merge and grow
(e.g. Time Warner)

Land of opoly

Large companies prevent new entrants
from entering the market

New technology prevents people from
"stealing" cable signals

Content providers don't have access to
houses unless cable providers agree to
carry them

OCLC and WorldCat

Consolidation and Monopolization of a Core Library Service



Catalogs



By Jeffrey Beall from Denver, Colorado, USA - Frederick G. Kilgour (1914-2004), CC BY-SA 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=45608233>

Ohio College Library Center (OCLC)

- Partnership between 54 academic libraries
 - Expansion temporarily halted in 1975
- Expanded to 1500 libraries (even outside Ohio) by 1979 after upgrading technology and altering governance structure

This was the

BREAKTHROUGH

Online Computer Library Center (OCLC)

Why, oh why, oh why-o
Why did they ever leave Ohio?

Ohio College Library Network (OCLC)

In 1975 a study of 47 libraries was done.

OCLC had:

- **eliminated original cataloging for small libraries**
- **significantly reduced overall time for catalog work**

Fringe benefits

Facilitation of **Interlibrary Loans**

Open Worldcat let Yahoo and Google link to library resources in 2004

(note: not really "open")

This was

PROLIFERATION

The Age of Integration

Horizontal

expansion of an existing service

The Age of Integration



Horizontal

expansion of an existing service

OCLC's Horizontal Expansion

- **2000:** Washington Library Network
- **2005:** Sisis Informationssysteme GmbH (Germany)
- **2005:** Fretwell-Downing Informatics (England)
- **2008:** Amlib (Australia)
- **2011:** BOND GmbH (Germany)
- **2013:** Huijsmans en Kuijpers Automatisering BV (Netherlands)
- **2016:** Ifnet (Italy)

The Age of Integration



Vertical

expansion into new services

OCCLC's Vertical Expansion

- **1988:** Forest Press (and the Dewey Decimal System)
- **2001:** NetLibrary (eBook publisher)
- **2006:** Openly Informatics (commercial resources and metadata)
- **2008:** EZProxy
- **2009:** OAIster (Open Access resource discovery)
- **2017:** DiMeMa (digital library management)
- **2017:** Relais (Interlibrary Loans)

Wrath of Beall (2008), Part 1

OCLC at some point will be exposed for the profit-seeking multinational corporation that it is, rather than the non-profit, cultural heritage organization it presents itself as.

This is

CONSOLIDATION

The M Word

Database sharing agreement created between
Washington Library Network
and
Research Library Group

Kilgour holds a meeting in Ohio

***"only libraries which input all their cataloging would be permitted
to use the OCLC system and access its data base"***

(Library Journal, 1979)

Copyright

OCLC attempts to copyright WorldCat
despite internal report recommending
against the move

OCLC believed all catalog sharing should
be fully reciprocal

1987 result: *OCLC Policy for Use and
Transfer of WorldCat Records*

The terror of Z39.50

Data networking protocol adapted for use over TCP/IP
and left openly accessible via the Internet

OCLC VP Gary Houk coins "record-nabbing" and says it
reduces "the economic viability of the cooperative
cataloging model."

(Houk, 2003)

Speaking of economics, though: please use OCLC's new, fee-based ILL service!

Wrath of Beall (2008), Part 2

When OCLC makes money on the deal, it's called "resource sharing."

When OCLC doesn't make money on the deal, it's called "record nabbing."

Whither the Open Library

Aaron Swartz and Brewster Kahle wanted a web page for every book ever published.

Why create a catalog when WorldCat already has one?

Problem: the Open Library wasn't an OCLC member

OCLC's policy response

First proposal:

Member libraries to add usage statements to all
MARC records, similar to copyright notices

Reaction:

Widespread debate and creation
of a review panel

Resolution:

Record usage guidelines changed. Reasonable use of WorldCat records
does not include anything that
"substantially replicates the function, purpose, and/or size of WorldCat."
(OCLC, 2009)

OCLC's goal:

balance record use with "the ongoing viability
of WorldCat and WorldCat-based services"

This is

PROTECTIONISM

OCLC and WorldCat

Consolidation and Monopolization of a Core Library Service



Where does this leave us?

OCLC is out of step with its original mission

Disruption is coming

Thank you!

Questions? Comments?
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