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Editorial: If You Could Freeze-Frame the Information Flow, What Would You Do?
Connie Foster

As the year 2010 marks the first decade of the twenty-first century, consider this question: "If you could freeze-frame the information flow for one month, what would you focus on?" Think of this exercise as creating a one- item (well, maybe a few items) bucket list. The challenge or unfinished business represents an opportunity to finish-- actually finish-- a project or effort that never ever ends so that you can move on to other languishing projects, or start something entirely new.

What *would* you do? This thought occurred to me, oddly enough, during the holiday season just passed. I wanted to catch the spirit and share the energy of the last-minute shoppers, even though I had my purchases well in hand or shipped, delivered, arranged under someone's tree, or so I thought. First, I saw a lady using her cell phone and making a U-turn while a Ford 250 was turning from his lane at the intersection (and rightly so) into the lane she wanted. No crushing blows; no morphing of a Nissan into a Ford; just a modest honk, and she finished her one-handed maneuver. Then I decided, most assuredly, that I hate 4-way stop signs. They are the epitome of indecision. I don't care who was really there first, just move on. Are you to my right or am I to your right? Who yields to whom? If I was there first but choose not to surge ahead, please move on. I don't mind, really. And, my last bit of festiveness dissipated and led to my "stop the world I want to get off" mode when the citizen more senior than I turned in front of a minivan driver who had stopped and was trying to be nice and not cause gridlock; the senior did not stop in the first lane and kept on going across the next lane where the approaching car did not sense all of this "niceness" occurring and hence, the big bang. By then I understood the depths of my fantasy for thinking that I could enjoy anything focused on last-minute esprit de corps, especially where cars and people were involved. Suddenly I just wanted to sit, stop, and visualize a totally cinematic freeze-frame of people scurrying along big city streets, so I could process what I needed to do, besides getting home in one piece. Somehow that thought migrated into the workplace. What if I could stop all noise, movement, system changes, pricing alerts, emails, facebook invitations, serial cancellations, changes from print to electronic, licensing details and focus on getting one thing done well. What would I do? Or, as Kay Johnson ponders in "The Balance Point," what projects, initiatives, database maintenance would most benefit patrons? Update URLs from an information service system that keeps me alerted but unable to act; establish a feasible ERM; use every waking moment to solicit content for the institutional repository and encourage faculty to create individual research pages; figure out the best e-book platform and pricing model, and so forth.

I hurriedly called upon my astute editorial board for some anonymous thoughts to answer from their perspectives:

> "I would respond to, file, dispose of or otherwise deal with the dozens – no, really, it's not hyperbole to say hundreds – of emails that languish in my Inbox."
> "Based solely on my thoughts today, which could be totally different tomorrow, I would focus on finding a new way to label our books and serials. We're using

ancient pin feed printers and a wasteful three layer process for our labels. I've had staff look into it, but they weren't keen on making changes at that time (or perhaps ever). Then we ran into short-staffing and other, more important matters, such as ordering and cataloging. Now, I've got a librarian looking into it, who will likely come up with something eventually. But I'd love to run with it if I had the time. Our current process works, so there is not a huge incentive to change when we've got other processes that don't work as well.
Labeling seems so mundane in our world of electronic resources. There are many sexier topics out there, but most are not as cut and dried as labeling. Tomorrow, I might say I want to implement the public part of our ERMS. But that's a complicated process that takes a lot of collaboration. I don't think it's possible to do in a month unless all parties have that same freeze-frame and incentive to work on the ERMS."

"Optimize our link resolver. We currently have III WebBridge, so link resolver rule and knowledgebase are managed locally. We're probably at 80%, but there are so many little things that don't work properly, could work better or provide additional services (e.g., linking to book chapters, to eBooks) that I could pursue if I had the time."

"I would
a.) clean up my "paperless" office (ha!)
b.) have time for thoughtful investigation, reflection and analysis of the vast amount of information I have already
c.) apply analysis in "b." to make improvements."

What *is* most urgent? Is it learning the newly installed MSWord software for this editorial? Is it catching up on all those links lurking in a vendor reporting system for verification? Is it addressing long-range planning based on staff retirements and the opportunity to create new positions that meet technical services needs for 2010 and beyond? Is it ongoing dialogues with publishers to change their bundled, contractual pricing models? What is your freeze-frame initiative?
While you consider possible answers, read through this first issue of Volume 36 of *Serials Review*. The breadth of content is excellent: a subscription agent sharing best practices on shifting from print to electronic resources; a survey of institutional repositories; an innovative idea of closed stacks for current issues and housing them in acquisitions; a detailed SFX migration, and a fascinating study of fashion periodicals used by faculty at the National Institute of Fashion Technology in Delhi, India.
The columns, likewise, carry a wealth of ideas and information: how technical services librarians can direct efforts towards public services and end users; an interview with a repository leader; conferences, book reviews, and the index to reviews of serial publications.

The year 2010 and this volume bring a few changes (still trying to get used to the font and type size of all Elsevier journals). We welcome a new regional editor from Chile. Claudia Cuervas joins our international outreach, particularly in South America. Claudia

is Serials Librarian, Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile, Santiago. Isabel Bernal, one of our other regional editors, has assumed a new position as coordinator of Digital.CSIC**,** the Institutional Repository of the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC). We wish her well in this exciting role as she remains on the board. Take a few minutes to look at the editorial board and column editors. They are an impressive, experienced group of individuals from varied sectors of the serials and scholarly information community. I thank them again for their service and commitment to the journal.

Hollywood we're not. Holidays will roll around again, and we will still be discussing many of the same issues that first surfaced in the mid-1970s (via NASIG). Freeze-frame aside, the end of 2009 did see several surprising no-strings-attached offers from journal and database publishers, such as pledges not to increase prices, archives offered at very low costs, and collections enhanced or expanded in cost-saving deals (I love it when vendors to the homework and number crunching and lay out the scenarios so I don't have to dig through information and tell them). A wish for the new year would be that more publishers would cut loose the restrictions of bundled or contractual pricing and radically alter their models (let me digress here: we are scolded often about our non-businesslike approach to doing business and decision making. I beg to differ. We have figured out how to do business and what we need to remain solvent and accountable. We do know how to manage our resources when we can gain mutually satisfactory agreements from the commercial sector. How nice it would be to know that the profit side is likewise making huge adjustments or radical alterations to their businesses) so that libraries can actually engage in true cancellation and cost-containment decisions as the economy dictates, or better than freeze-frame, roll back pricing to a different level of consideration. May 2010 be a year of action, analysis, and anticipation of an upturn in the economy so that we can add to our bucket lists and move forward with all of our initiatives.