

Hi. I'm Monica Berger from New York City College of Technology. I'm very pleased to be setting the landscape for our next two speakers, Madeline Ford from Lehman College and Clay Williams from Hunter College. Both are exceptionally articulate and consummate at connecting people with people, connecting people with ideas. I'd also like to thank Kenneth Schlesinger for making LACUNY Dialogues happen for a second year in a row. My theme is the democratization of information and how it is affecting the profession.

Here's a little apocryphal story: I was doing a presentation on scholarly communication for the faculty at my college and questions about wikis and the Wikipedia came up. I popped "open" on my browser and started typing in "www.wikipedia.org." The page wasn't opening and I started to wonder if I got the domain wrong, if the url was wikipedia.com. As we waiting for the page to load, one of the attendees, an engineering professor, stepped up to solve the problem. "I know how you can find it! I use this all the time. It's this website called Google." [pause].The server responded, my page loaded, and, mercifully, we went on to consider the Wikipedia.

Let's open with the latest forecast from OCLC. These findings are part of Perceptions of Libraries and Information Resources. Some findings I'd like everyone to keep in mind as we progress through this morning's meeting:

1. "Respondents use search engines to begin an information search (84 percent).
One percent begin an information search on a library Web site.
2. Respondents do not trust purchased information more than free information.

3. Ninety percent of respondents are satisfied with their most recent search for information using a search engine.
4. Information consumers like self-serve. (1).

2005 was a really interesting year, wasn't it? I call it the year of social networking. And the year of whining about Google. Users are changing but are we? I remember when I was in library school reading an essay by Jose Ortega y Gasset about the librarian as cultural gatekeeper (2). These days, we might want to reframe the librarian as technology and information gatekeeper. Well, guess what? And technology is whizzing ahead without librarians. And are we supposed to be gatekeepers and organizers of information? How can we do that when our users often avoid using library resources and go straight out to the WWW? Sometimes, I get the feeling that people avoid institutions like libraries because they don't LIKE gatekeepers.

I had an interesting conversation at a party with a computer guy about the Wikipedia. For those of you unfamiliar with the Wikipedia, it is an online encyclopedia that anyone can contribute to. Wikis require minimal coding skills and no special server privileges. They remove the barriers normally involved in website creation. The Wikipedia recently was in trouble because of one bad apple uploading a fraudulent article. The Wikipedia isn't perfect but it works because of social networking: we want to connect, we want to be fair, we can police ourselves and we don't need a rich payoff. We've been taught to think of copyright and intellectual property in this very rigid way: you create it, you own, you control it. But Lawrence Lessig at Stanford and Siva Vaidhyanathan at NYU have it

right: we share it, we create it, we share it again and we all profit. When we share our digital content, there is no incipient loss.

Did you read the NY Times' YEAR IN IDEAS piece on FOLKSONOMY? This is an idea that warms AND chills my cataloger's heart. Folksonomy is social tagging: users can assign their own descriptive tags to content and do social networking in the process on a fairly microlevel, e.g. Flickr and de.li.cious. For example, I have taken a photograph of a common yellowthroat warbler. I post one and I add these tags which have no common level of specificity, no authority control: 1) warbler 2) common yellowthroat 3) birds and 4) prospect park. The tags are openly visible on the webpage. Other visitors to Flickr will find my photo and they are invited to comment on it and even vote. Users can sort the photos by "most interesting!" And if someone really likes my Flickr content, they can see who my other Flickr contacts are and which public groups in Flickr I belong to. And I can invite my birdwatching friends to join up as well. Users can even change my tags if I misidentified the bird. There's no info police or gatekeeper. But that still doesn't mean that social tagging is GOOD. Hopefully, it will be more good than bad. Like a Google search. But wouldn't it be awesome if our library search engines and opacs could be interactive and utilize our users' search language? Two extremes: folksonomy and authority control. What's a cataloger to do? Steven Bell says "good enough is ok." Is it?

So, let's whine about Google. Or may not. Google = Microsoft. Do you remember not being able to convert Mac files to PC or WordPerfect to MSWord? Now we live in this nice, bland, vanilla Microsoft universe. Google is vanilla too: like a nice, white icebox.

It's here to stay and it's going to continue getting bigger and bigger in all its flavors beyond vanilla, GooglePrint, GoogleScholar, and so on. Let's make peace with Google. Let's educate users how to use it well, explain how it works, and most importantly, consider Google the ultimate lesson in USABILITY. Read Steven Bell of the University of Philadelphia. He's also StevenB. on ACRL's exciting new blog.

I'll wrap-up with an anecdote. As I mentioned earlier, I did a talk on all facets of scholarly communication for the faculty at my campus recently. I showed faculty members all sorts of interesting cutting digital library content, preprints archives, open access journals and, just to be comprehensive and presuming possible ignorance of information literacy basics, the library's proprietary ejournal collections using Project Muse as an example. When I asked my audience about their experience using our licensed ejournal collections, Professor Google piped up again. "I never use the library: I get what I need from Google." This scenario, I'm sure, has played itself out countless times for all us. So what do we do about these faculty members who think Google's just fine and "good enough is ok"? I turn the platform over to Clay and Madeline who will move us forward in how we market ourselves as key shareholders in this highly democratized information landscape.

1 Perceptions of Libraries and Information Resources: A Report to the OCLC Membership (2005) <http://www.oclc.org/reports/2005perceptions.htm>

2 Ortega y Gasset, J. (1961). The mission of the librarian. *The Antioch Review*, 21(2), 133-154.