



NCLIS

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For Immediate Release

NCLIS Issues Report from Symposium on Mass Digitization

Focus is on Implications for Information Policy

Washington DC May 10, 2006. The Chairman of the U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS), Dr. Beth Fitzsimmons, announced today the publication of a report from the symposium “Scholarship and Libraries in Transition: A Dialogue about the Impacts of Mass Digitization Projects.” The symposium was held at the University of Michigan on March 10-11, 2006. The URL for the free 24-page report is <http://www.nclis.gov/digitization/MassDigitizationSymposium-Report.pdf>. Persons wishing to request a hard copy of the report may send a request to info@nclis.gov.

The idea for the symposium was inspired by the announcement in December 2004 for a partnership between Google, Inc. and five major research libraries to digitize over 10 million unique titles. This partnership launched a new era of large-scale digitization heretofore not imagined feasible or affordable. However, the “Google 5” project has generated many questions about the legal, social, economic, and other impacts of this and similar projects that will inevitably follow Google’s lead. The symposium brought together scholars, librarians, publishers, government leaders to discuss their concerns and issues. NCLIS co-sponsored the symposium, which was planned and organized by the University of Michigan Library staff and funded mainly by the University of Michigan.

After the symposium, because of their responsibility to address the information and learning needs of the American people, NCLIS Commissioners summed up nine major issues that have information policy implications and connected them to key points made during the symposium. The nine issues or areas that the Commission identified to have potential impact on national information policy are:

1. Copyright: How should important aspects of copyright—fair use, orphan works, opt-in vs. opt-out models—be handled in digitization projects?

2. Quality: When is the quality of OCR good enough? What about quality of content and authentication?
3. Libraries: What are the roles and priorities for libraries in the digital age?
4. Ownership and preservation: Who will assume long-term ownership of books and journals and other media? Who will take responsibility for long-term preservation of books and journals and other media, and preserving the public record?
5. Standardization and interoperability: How can the silos of digital initiatives communicate with each other?
6. Publishers: What are the roles of publishers and booksellers in the digital age?
7. Business models: What business models are needed in the era of mass digitization? How will the open access movement affect the economics of digitization?
8. Information literacy: What should be done about information illiteracy?
9. Assessment: What types of assessment are being used? How will we know if digitization and electronic access are meeting people's needs?

This report sums up the key points under each of these nine topics and concludes that finding workable solutions will have to involve authors, scholars, publishers, libraries, associations, and government agencies. The solutions will involve education and awareness, policies, responsibility, standards, quality, cooperation, rights, sustainability, technology, and assessment.

The Webcast of the entire symposium may be found on the symposium Web page: <http://www.lib.umich.edu/mdp/symposium/>.

ABOUT NCLIS

The U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS) is a permanent, independent agency of the Federal government charged by Public Law 91-345 to advise the President and Congress on national and international library and information policies, to appraise and assess the adequacies and deficiencies of library and information resources and services, and to develop overall plans for meeting national library and information needs.

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