

While here in Los Angeles I was invited to attend a talk by Paul Courant, the Provost of University of Michigan at the Getty Institute on the topic "Reflections on the Google Deal." Since the Library is discussing Google Scholar, perhaps the summary below will be useful. Courant confined his remarks to the digitization of 8M UMich volumes.

Courant believes that Michigan's agreement with Google will change the world in important ways:

- Making the results of scholarship more accessible will help make American universities' contribution to economic development more visible and increase the perceived value of academe to society
- Though UMich has no intention of breaking the law, an anticipated positive benefit of the "Google deal" will be the disruption of an outmoded copyright regime.

The audience (mainly staff of the Getty Research Center) asked excellent and probing questions. (I had a few of my own too.)

Courant often deflected these or gave less than complete answers, sometimes saying that he could not respond before consulting with legal counsel. It wasn't clear whether he didn't know the answers, didn't want to be clear about them, or if the matter was still subject to negotiation. Some of the issues imperfectly addressed include:

1. Was Google going to provide access to the text of material still under copyright and what might be the legalities involved? Only when pressed did Courant agree that so far what's being discussed is providing only "snippets" of copyrighted material. He also pointed out that increased accessibility increases value and that it is less clear now what has "street" value and what doesn't.
2. Was Google going to use cataloguing available for the material? Courant's answer was that Google was "less interested" than Michigan in using cataloguing records.
3. What was UMich going to do with its copy of the database? Courant spoke initially as though Google would "give" UMich a copy of the full text of the 8 million print volumes being scanned and OCR'd. Actually, under questioning, it became clear that it would be Michigan's responsibility to house and maintain this database. Courant was not concerned about the cost of this since he said it was "in the Library's budget." Implicit in his remarks was the idea that institutional shifts of resources would occur as the impact of the overall project spreads. Whether UMICH will digitize new acquisitions as receive did not come up

UMich intends, if possible, to make the full text database of its holdings freely available to Michigan users. Whether this is legal or not remains to be seen.

4. When asked about the quality of what has been produced so far, Courant said the librarians at UMich said that it was "pretty good," which he added was about "as good an answer as you could expect" from librarians in this kind of a situation.
5. To accomplish the far-reaching changes Courant envisions will require large scale cooperation among multiple entities with various quid pro quos coming into play. The path for this is as yet uncharted.

When asked what Google was getting out of this, Courant said he really didn't know, but putting together information and people who need information may often result in the making of money.

Since Courant was speaking right after Peter Givler sent his letter of protest re: copyright issues on behalf of the Amer. Assoc. of Univ. Presses, Courant had to make some comment about objections coming from this quarter. Basically, he said the future of University presses had nothing to do with Google but was dependent on the deficiencies of their current business model and that Givler's action was not very constructive.

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