

**MAC/MLA 2005 ANNUAL MEETING
ROUND TABLES
DISCUSSION SUMMARIES**

The 2005 Mid-Atlantic Chapter Round Table Discussions were held during lunch on October 6, 2005. The participants covered eleven timely topics: AHIP; Best Practices for Electronic Reference; Collaboration/Consortia/Partnerships; Consumer Health; Go-Local Endeavors; Health Literacy; Informationist; Is Paper Passé?; Mobile Technology; Recruitment Issues; and Turf to Worth. Because of high interest, there were two tables each for Turf to Worth and Is Paper Passé? Below are summaries to some of the discussions.

Is Paper Passé?

(Table 1)

Pat Thibodeau, Facilitator

This roundtable thought that paper was here to stay, at least for another 5 to 10 years. Participants in this roundtable thought that the media was placing too much attention on the fate of libraries and the digital collection. The experience for the librarians at this table is that users still want and need paper, even the technical folks. Patrons find paper easier to use and ergonomically sounder, especially for those with aging eyes or vision problems. While most of the libraries represented are moving more and more to e-formats, there are still paper copies in all the libraries, and one librarian reported that their library and agency still place a high value on paper. However, the roundtable conceded that online access and searching were the preferred modes over print copies. Assessing electronic materials, especially those on the Internet, is more difficult, and users appear to prefer convenience over quality. But the Wikipedia and Google are good starting points for both librarians and patrons.

What does the future hold the library in the digital world? Most libraries will move more and more to e-formats, but the future also raises quite a few concerns. Who will keep the old stuff? Do we need to keep paper copies in case the publishers start charging for back files? Will the older materials be scanned? Ten-years of medical materials is not enough to fulfill information needed. A permanent, archival record of the original is still needed. Will digital copies suffice, especially since they can be modified? Also the print copies contain important historical materials that are often not included in the digital format, such as advertisements and obituaries. While no one has seen a great decrease in work since digital arrived, everyone commented on how the focus of our work was shifting from collections to other services.

Is Paper Passé?

(Table 2)

Melanie Norton, Facilitator

Participants: Cathy Jordan, Charlie Lackey, Claire Meissner, Mary Parker, Dan Wilson, Janna Mattson

It decided early on in the discussion that paper was not passé. There will always be paper. However, the percentages of paper used may change. For example, email may have eliminated some paper mail, however, often times people still print out long emails. Or they print out an article in an e-journal or a chapter in an e-book. We discussed the negative as well as the positive side of e-publications.

Negatives of electronic publications include:

- E-books are more expensive than hard copies
- Sometimes the connections to e-journals are inaccessible or not activated (although they should be)
- Ariel firewalls in many hospital libraries prohibit the delivery of articles electronically to patrons.
- Licensing agreements vary among libraries, often prohibiting interlibrary loans of e-resources

Positives of electronic publications include:

- Great for remote users. E-publications provide access to information for more people.
- Space issues...paper copies take up a lot more room than digital.
- The younger generation (internet natives) seem to enjoy the electronic versions of publications.