The Challenges of Change for Technical Services

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New England Technical Services Librarians
April 8, 2011

Perfect Storm

Main Entry: **perfect storm**
Function: *noun*
Date: 1936
: a critical or disastrous situation created by a powerful concurrence of factors

Critical/Disastrous Situation #1

In “A Letter to His Kids,” *Wired*'s Founding Editor Recalls the Dawn of the Digital Revolution:

In the very first issue (March 1993) I wrote, "The Digital Revolution is whipping through our lives like a Bengali typhoon.“ Got a lot of grief for that typhoon reference — as if it were a pretentious exaggeration instead of the understatement it turned out to be. Should have said the Digital Revolution was ripping through our lives like the meteor that extinguished the dinosaurs. Practically every institution that our society is based on, from the local to the supranational, is being rendered obsolete. This is the world you are inheriting.

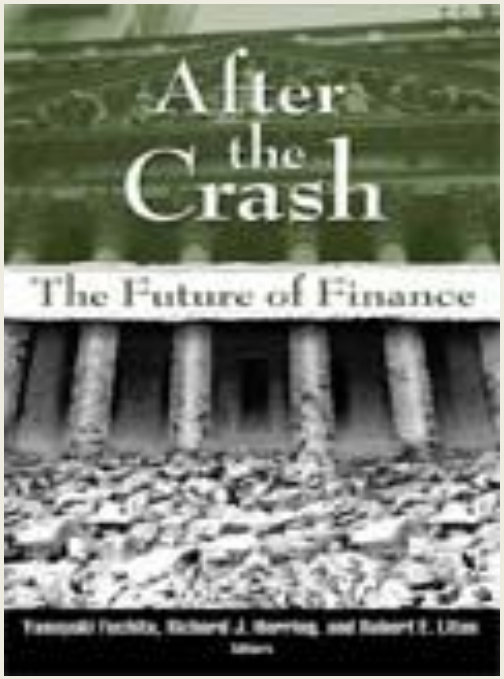
Louis Rossetto

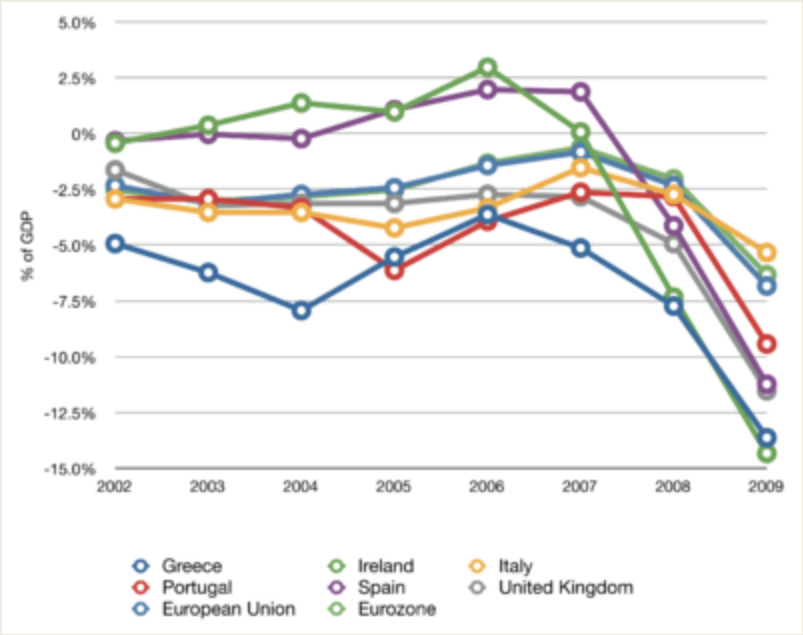
“What we got right – and wrong.”

Wired. *June 2008*

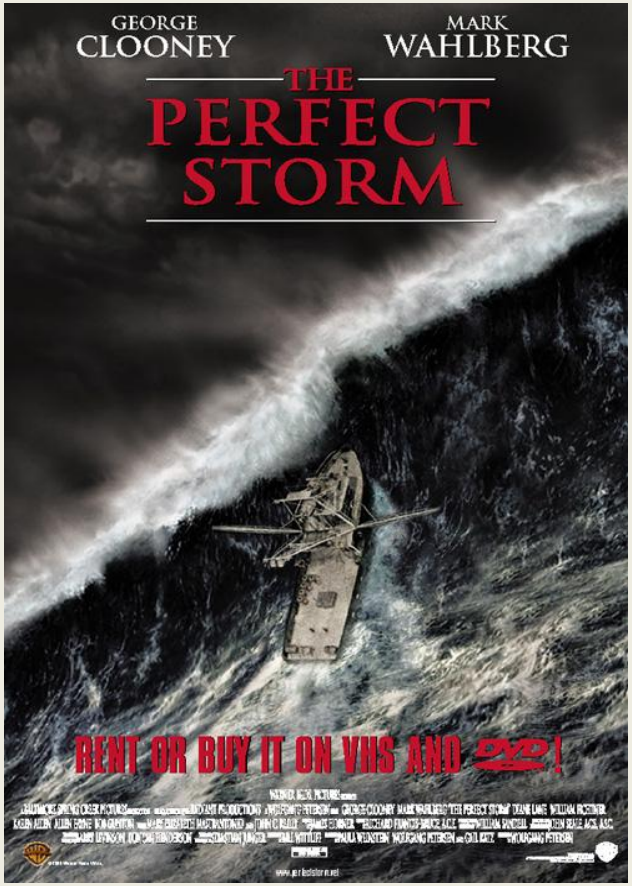
Critical/Disastrous Situation #2

Global economic downturn





The Perfect Storm – The Movie



Is this the Library ???

Technical Services??

Biggest Challenge for Libraries

- Biggest challenge is **not** budgets
- Biggest challenge is **adapting** to the digital environment

Attributed to Charles Darwin:

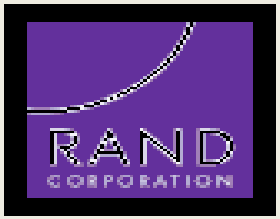
"It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is the most adaptable to change."

The Information Age and the Printing Press: Looking Backward to See Ahead

James A. Dewar

Rand Report P-8014. *1998*

http://rand.org/pubs/papers/P8014/index2.html



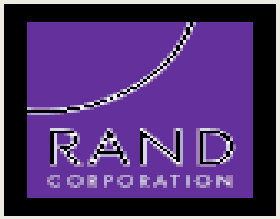
The Information Age and the Printing Press: Looking Backward to See Ahead.

- Information Age is defined by networked computers

- Internet dates back to 1962 when concept of packet switching and ARPANET (Advanced Research Projects Agency Network) was developed to maintain connectivity of the military command and control network in case of nuclear attack.

- World Wide Web – 1990

- Google released – 2000



The Information Age and the Printing Press: Looking Backward to See Ahead.

- Communication before the printing press:

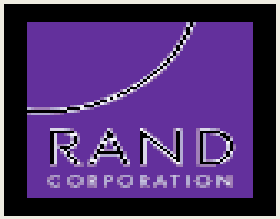
One to One

- Communication with the printing press:

One to Many

- Communication in the Information Age:

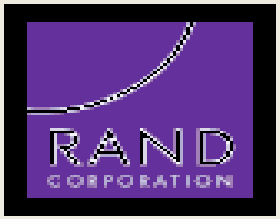
Many to Many



The Information Age and the Printing Press: Looking Backward to See Ahead.

The parallels between the printing press era and today are sufficiently compelling to suggest:

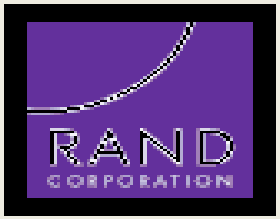
Changes in the information age will be as dramatic as those in the Middle Ages in Europe. The printing press has been implicated in the Reformation, the Renaissance and the Scientific Revolution, all of which had profound effects on their eras; similarly profound changes may already be underway in the information age.



The Information Age and the Printing Press: Looking Backward to See Ahead.

The parallels between the printing press era and today are sufficiently compelling to suggest:

The future of the information age will be dominated by unintended consequences. The Protestant Reformation and the shift from an earth-centered to a sun-centered universe were unintended consequences in the printing press era. We are already seeing unintended consequences in the information age that are dominating intended ones and there are good reasons to expect more in the future.



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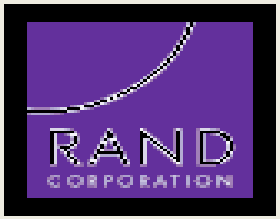
The parallels between the printing press era and today are sufficiently compelling to suggest:

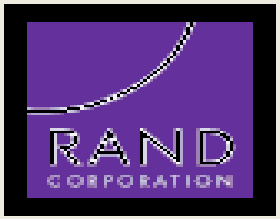
It will be decades before we see the full effects of the information age. The important effects of the printing press era were not seen clearly for more than 100 years. While things happen more quickly these days, it could be decades before the winners and losers of the information age are apparent. Even today, significant (and permanent) cultural change does not happen quickly.



The Information Age and the Printing Press: Looking Backward to See Ahead.

The parallels between the printing press era and today are sufficiently compelling to suggest:

The above factors combine to argue for: a) keeping the Internet unregulated, and b) taking a much more experimental approach to information policy. Societies who regulated the printing press suffered and continue to suffer today in comparison with those who didn't. With the future to be dominated by unintended consequences and a long time in emerging, a more experimental approach to policy change (with special attention to unintended consequences) is soundest.



The Information Age and the Printing Press: Looking Backward to See Ahead.

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By Sam Gustin February 11, 2011 | 2:56 pm | Categories: People, Politics, Social Media

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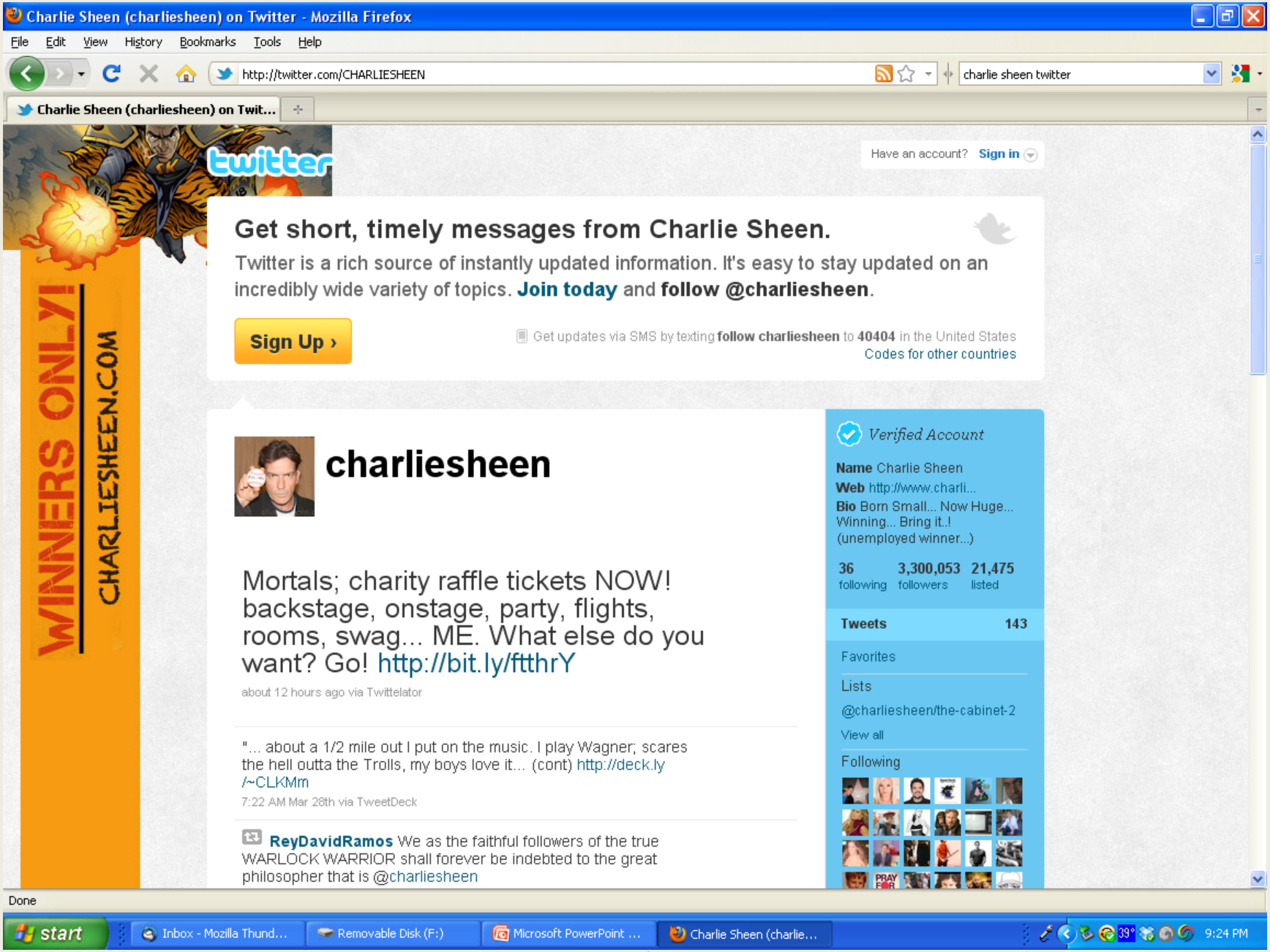
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Unanticipated Consequences for Technical Services

The Shift from Print to Digital Resources

- Library Catalog and A&I tools
- Full text databases
- E-journals
- Digitized print/media resources
- Born digital resources
- E-books

Transformation of Tasks and Tools

Discovery

- Cards
- Online
- Cloud

Transformation of Tasks and Tools

Serials

- Check in
- Binding
- E-journals
- Open URL linking

Transformation of Tasks and Tools

Monographs

- Selection
- Acquisitions
- Licensing
- E-Books

The Last Recession: UMass Amherst Libraries

- Consolidated vendor
- E-selection
- Shelf ready books
- Use-based collection decisions
- “Just in time” *vs.* “Just in case”
- Expedited document delivery/ILL services

This Recession:
Five Colleges Collaboration

The Goal

- Unify the user experience across the five libraries
- Maximize efficiencies so staff can deal with new "21st Century" tasks
- Provide cost savings where possible

This Recession:
Five Colleges Collaboration

The Dream – Print Resources

- Consolidation
- The "One Centralize Technical Services" Model

This Recession:
Five Colleges Collaboration

The Reality – Print Resources

- Consolidated vendor
- Shelf ready books
- Reduce unnecessary duplication

This Recession:
Five Colleges Collaboration

The Dream – Electronic Resources

- Common Collections
- Common Discovery
  - Discovery tool to supplement OPAC
  - A-Z E-journal list
  - A-Z Database list
- Expedited article delivery – Rapid ILL

This Recession:
Five Colleges Collaboration

The Reality – Implementation Issues

- Perceived "disrespecting" of past work
- Perceived disregard of "local value added"
- Loss of local control
- HR Issues
  - Re-location of employees
  - Benefits/Retire issues
  - Unions

The Future of the Library (5-10 years out)

- Cloud collections
- Cloud discovery
- Cloud technical services
- Emphasis on special collections
- Preservation of local digital scholarship

The Future of Technical Services (5-10 years out)

- Caring for the legacy print collections
  - Maintain small current print collections, print on demand
  - Move legacy print collections to depository
- Licensing
- Multi-media
- Digitization
- Data curation for locally created resources (digital humanities, E-science, digital repositories)
- E-publishing

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Thank You

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