The Public Information Commons: What it is and Why the Open Content Alliance Cares about It

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Abstract

The powerful communications and information dissemination network from which we daily benefit is transforming social and business environments; it is changing pedagogical and educational activities; and it is accelerating the course of scientific inquiry and productivity. One important component among the resources of the Internet is an open, freely accessible "knowledge commons:" the online equivalent of a public library. Mr. Grycz will address the state of progress in building a truly open online library as envisioned by members of the Open Content Alliance, and will also discuss challenges and opportunities for its desired expansion and growth.

Author Biography

Czeslaw (Chet) Jan Grycz is Curator of Books for the Internet Archive (http://www.archive.org). As curator, Grycz works with libraries to help make available to the public, notable collections of materials to the growing open repository developed and maintained by the Internet Archive. Such materials are contributed by the libraries under the Principles of the Open Content Alliance (http://www.opencontentalliance.org/participate.html) and are made available freely to anyone in the world through the Archive's digital repository, which is mirrored in the United States, the Netherlands, and in Alexandria, Egypt.

Previous to joining the Internet Archive, Grycz was, for eight years, CEO and Publisher of Octavo, a company founded in 1997 by Adobe Systems co-founder, John Warnock (http://www.octavo.com). Octavo's principal activities involved ultra-high resolution digital imaging technologies and publishing processes involving rare books. Its equipment was installed at the Library of Congress in the US, and at the Bodleian Library (Oxford) in the UK. Among the works digitized by Octavo was the Library of Congress' copy of Biblia Latina, printed by Johannes Gutenberg, the Magna Carta, the first edition of Nicolas Copernicus' de Revolutionibus, Euclid's 777 AD Manuscript of Elements of Geometry, and many similar treasures. Current digitization of rare and valuable books continues under the non-profit Libraries Without Walls, Inc. (http://www.librarieswithoutwalls.org).

An editor and author of numerous technical and scholarly articles and publications, Grycz has taught several courses on Internet publishing technologies at the University of California at Berkeley Extension and has studied the impact of electronic resources and user behavior on academic libraries and scholarly publishers. He was also instrumental in organizing and establishing of a post-graduate International Center for Information Management, Systems & Services (ICIMSS) at Nicholas Copernicus University in Torun, Poland, which serves professional librarians and information specialists in Central and Eastern Europe.