

LibraryCrunch

Service for the Next Generation Library: A Library 2.0 Perspective by Michael Casey

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Libraries and the Long Tail

I keep reading that librarians and libraries think they're actually serving the Long Tail. How can this be so? Yet I continue to read articles that make that claim, with librarians patting themselves on the back saying, "Oh, we've always served the long tail". Sorry, but for the vast majority of libraries this has simply **never** been the case. The long tail is more than simply a couple thousand niche titles tucked away in the stacks. The long tail is perhaps 80% of books printed *every* year. What percentage of books does *your* library buy? According to Bowker, 2005 saw 172,000 new titles and editions published in the United States. 206,000 new titles were published in the UK. Still think you have a grip on that long tail? I didn't think so.

We have a long way to go in order to serve that tail. We may get there, in time, but we're nowhere near there now.

Posted by Michael on August 6, 2006 07:37 PM | [Permalink](#)

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