Chapter X

Everything That Can Communicate Will:
Aspects of Digital Asset Alignment and Management

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ABSTRACT
The concept of aligning and managing digital assets is a reaction to the evolution of digital production and digital networks. The understanding of this evolution is rooted in experiences in library and museum communities, the digital solutions and design disciplines, the communications and entertainment industries, and law. Aligning and managing digital assets is predicated upon the notion that everything that can communicate will and, in a sense, begins to approach what neuroscience has been telling us for quite some time — that everything actually does communicate in some way or other. There are a number of levels of digital assets. Digital assets are created and maintained in support systems architecture, in digital production tools, in digital content development, in taxonomy development, in user destination designs, in audience
interactions, and in legal monitoring. Being digital means everything can be accounted for, everything can communicate, everything has value, and everything can last. Acquiring, merging, or divesting a digital enterprise requires comprehensive digital asset management at every level.

**NO THERE THERE**

Digital communication has become ephemeral content. There is no object, such as a bound book or celluloid film; rather, content exists as a digital asset to be accessed. The issues are how to make the digital assets accessible, how content can be widely distributed, and how the components that created the content can be reused. There are a number of misconceptions about digital asset production and distribution that should be acknowledged:

- Digital asset creation costs less than physical analog production. Digital asset creation can be more expensive than physical production depending upon what kind of strategic treatment the material is given.
- Digital asset creation is easier than that of older physical forms. Digital asset production is often not easier than traditional mediums because there are so many new options available in the digital realm.
- Digital asset production is as coherent as traditional forms. Digital is evolving as it is being understood, which makes it very difficult to know exactly what the best choices are at any given moment.

Traditional publishing practices have radically changed. Pricing-based units of information (books), libraries as distributors, intellectual property, royalties, marketing as the primary means of stimulating sales, and the shifts away from container-based infrastructures like the packaging of paper books have all altered the practices of publishing.

What have been required are strategies for going between object-based and content-based pricing. Transitional strategies include providing individual and institutional access to electronic materials, developing digitized content, digital access tools, and the consumer purchase of print as well as electronic forms. The development of digital accounting standards and digital intellectual property rights are paramount in digital asset management processes. In digital asset creation novelty becomes the required. The rapid demand for hyperlinks, interactive graphics, full motion video, and sound on the Web are all evidence of novel ideas becoming standards.

Digital technology facilitates the creation and exchange of data, information, and knowledge across ever expanding networks. This condition raises