

## **Book Review of *The Long Tail***

by Tom Roth, Interlibrary Loan

*The Long Tail: Why the Future of Business is Selling Less of More* by Chris Anderson. New York: Hyperion. c2006. 238 pages, illustration, index. \$24.95. Available from a variety of sources, bookstores, Amazon, etc.

Chris Anderson's main audience is the business community, but this small book also has some good advice and information for librarians. *The Long Tail* refers to serving niche communities, and not just the larger mainstream community. Due to computer technology, a wider variety of products and services are available to a wider and more specific type of audience. This is especially true for the small library that has a very limited budget. With the long tail, you can use resources such as Amazon, iTunes, etc. to help fill the needs of very specific niches of customers. Also, with resources such as Wikipedia, even the smallest library can have access to the largest encyclopedia in the world. With Amazon, you are not limited to a bookstore or jobber that has only a specific selection of books and other materials. With a resource like Amazon, you have access to millions of books and audio and video materials. You can fill the most specific patron demands.

Mr. Anderson does mention libraries as a resource, and Interlibrary loan is also mentioned. And here is where librarians have been using the long tail for many years. No library can own all books and materials needed to fill the very specific needs of all of the library patrons. Interlibrary loan does fulfill this need and interlibrary loan is used heavily in Kansas.

The long tail looks beyond the common and ordinary types of books, music, and other resources required by customers and looks to fulfill the needs of the various niche groups that often get overlooked by the mainstream bookstore, record store, and library collection. With today's technology, the long tail can be a reality for anyone with access to the Internet. Everyone can find what they want and the most unusual needs can be met. This concept allows someone who lives in the smallest town to gain access to the whole world of literature, the most esoteric music, and a very wide range of cultural offerings.

Every librarian would benefit from reading this book. I think that librarians can be proud that we have been using "the long tail" concept for years, through interlibrary loan, and through collection development tools that seek to meet the demands of as many people as possible within our given communities.

In particular, the information on Wikipedia is quite helpful. Mr Anderson states that Wikipedia is getting better and larger every day. While there are errors in Wikipedia, studies find that the correction rate for entries is within 4 minutes, versus the next edition for a print encyclopedia. Information, like other products, is becoming more available, flexible and adaptable.