Cites & Insights

Crawford at Large

Libraries • Policy • Technology • Media

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Bibs & Blather

Three Times Ten

This is the first of three issues that could each be considered 10th Anniversary issues for *Cites & Insights*—depending on your definitions:

- This issue completes a decade of publishing C&I. The first issue, which appeared before Volume 1 Issue 1, was dated December 2000; thus, November 2010 completes a decade.
- The next issue will complete the 10th volume.
- Assuming there is a January 2011 issue, it's the first issue *after* the completion of ten volumes. We celebrate anniversaries and birthdays the first day after the completion of X number of years, and from what I've seen most magazines also celebrate significant anniversaries that way.

For the first of three celebratory issues, I'm going to do...nothing special. The same will, I believe, be true for the others. I did too much reprinting of older material after the (misnumbered) Centenary Issue and in the 50th issue. Instead, this is a typically atypical issue—a hodgepodge.

Readership Update

I looked at readership in May 2009, and maybe this is a good time to look at it again. I update a spreadsheet with recent figures (from Urchin analysis of server logs at citesandinsights.info) every three or six months; these figures run through September 30, 2010, and exclude readership before December 2002.

I count two things: PDF downloads and HTML pageviews for articles only. Those two things yield one figure for issues and two for articles—that is, specific article pageviews and the sum of article pageviews and issue downloads.

In the first nine months of 2010 there have been 63,329 PDF downloads, for a total of 593,028 since December 2002, and 154,668 HTML article pageviews, for a total of 833,890 since December 2002.

Most Widely-Read Issues

As was true in May 2009, there are two "hot" issues—ones downloaded more than 10,000 times in PDF form. Volume 6 Issue 2, *Library 2.0 and "Library 2.0,"* is now up to 28,634 PDF downloads (that's more than 7,000 more than in May 2009!), *not* including all the HTML pageviews. Volume 3 Issue 9, *Coping with CIPA: A Censorware Special*, is up to 14,942 PDF downloads.

Inside This Issue

Five issues have more than 8,000 PDF downloads each (there were none of these in May 2009); three show 7,000-7,999 downloads; 15 show 6,000-6,999; 14 have been downloaded 5,000 to 5,999 times; and 30 run 4,000 to 4,999 downloads. That's 69 of the 144 issues and indexes published through September 30, 2010.

Issues gain readership over time. Eleven PDFs—two of them annual indexes—have, *so far*, been downloaded fewer than 1,000 times each, and all nine of the issues are from Volume 10. (Four of the nine are already over my "700 or more readers" bar, not including article pageviews.) Another 21 (including one index) have at least 1,000 but fewer than 2,000 PDF downloads—a combination of issues from Volume 9, one from Volume 10, a few from Volume 8 and some issues from Volumes 1 and 2, where early readership wasn't counted.

Most Widely-Read Articles

The easiest and probably best way to calculate article readership is to add HTML pageviews to PDF downloads for the issue—but that assumes that people downloading the issue read the article.

On that basis, and noting that there aren't any HTML versions for Volumes 1-3, the highest (*of*

course) readership is the single article in Volume 6 Issue 2, with 48,219 total to date. Remarkably (to me at least!), there are two others with more than 20,000 combined readership: "Investigating the Biblioblogosphere" (22,658) and "Looking at Liblogs: The Great Middle" (21,812). Twenty-nine more articles have combined readership in excess of 10,000; 32 have 9,000 to 9,999 readers and 35 show readership between 8,000 and 9,999; 49 are between 7,000 and 7,999; and 92 more 5,000-6,999—a total of 238 articles, out of the 370 tracked, with more than 5,000 readership.

Last time around, I included tables showing all articles over 8,000 (32 in all) and between 7,000 and 7,999 (34 more). Equivalent tables would now total 145 lines, so I'll only list articles with more than 10,000 readers.

Articles with more than 10,000 apparent readership

ID	Views	Title
v6i2a	48,219	Library 2.0 and "Library 2.0"
v5i10b	22,658	Perspective: Investigating the Biblioblogosphere
v6i10a	21,182	Perspective: Looking at Liblogs: The Great Middle
v7i2c	15,810	Perspective: Conference Speaking: I Have a Little List
v5i13a	15,345	Perspective: Life Trumps Blogging
v5i5a	13,040	Bibs & Blather
v5i10d	12,786	(C)2 Perspective: Orphan Works
v7i1b	12,714	Perspective: Book Searching: OCA/GBS Update
v6i4a	12,332	Perspective: Folksonomy and Dichotomy
v4i12a	12,277	Perspective: Wikipedia and Worth
v6i10b	11,642	Bibs & Blather
v6i4d	11,553	PC Progress, October 2005-February 2006
v4i12c	11,241	Offtopic Perspective: The Rest of the DoubleDoubles
v4i3c	11,237	PC Progress, July 2003-January 2004
v4i12b	11,149	Copyright Currents
v4i12d	10,956	Interesting & Peculiar Products
v4i12e	10,884	Copyright Perspective: IICA: Inducing to Infringe
v6i4e	10,812	Offtopic Perspective: 50-Movie All Stars Collection 1
v4i12f	10,708	Trends & Quick Takes
v6i12d	10,579	Open Access Perspective, Part II: Pioneer OA Journals: Preliminary Additions from DOAJ
v6i4b	10,544	The Library Stuff
v6i3a	10,428	Followup Perspective: Beyond Library 2.0 and "Library 2.0"
v6i9a	10,387	Bibs & Blather
v6i6a	10,385	Perspective: Discovering Books
v5i14a	10,376	Perspective: OCA and GLP 1: Ebooks, Etext, Libraries and the Commons
v6i1e	10,312	(C)2 Perspective: Will Fair Use Survive?
v6i12a	10,265	Open Access Perspective Part I: Pioneer Journals: The Arc of Enthusiasm, Five Years Later
v6i3e	10,241	(C)2 Perspective: What NC Means to Me
v6i4c	10,209	(C)1: Term & Extent
v7i1d	10,149	Finding a Balance: Patrons and the Library
v6i1c	10,086	Interesting & Peculiar Products
v7i9a	10,047	Perspective: On the Literature

It's interesting to look at article pageviews independent of issue downloads but I'm not sure it's meaningful.

Just for fun, I did an "exceptions list" this time around—looking at those cases where separate article pageviews actually **exceed** issue downloads. There are 42 such cases, including nine where the difference is more than 1,000, and two of those *are* fairly recent: The full-issue article "Library Access to Scholarship" from November 2009 (6,150 total, of which 3,751 are article pageviews) and, from February 2009, "Making it Work: Shiny Toys or Useful Tools?" (4,259 total, of which 2,737 are article pageviews). The biggest imbalance? "Conference Speaking: I Have a Little List," from with 11,657 pageviews and 4,153 issue downloads. (Second through fourth: All blogging-related.)

No conclusions. I find the numbers for "Library Access to Scholarship" interesting, as it was the final installment of that section, and hope it means thousands of library people will buy the ALA Editions Special Report *Open Access: What You Need to Know Now* when it emerges in 2011.

What about the Blog Studies?

What follows is taken from an October 6, 2010 post at *Walt at Random*—and by the time you read this I will have already started work on *The Liblog Landscape 2007-2010*. No, I haven't decided my course of action just yet. Comments welcome to waltcrawford at gmail dot com.

Background

I've been gathering data for an "as complete as possible" overview of English-language liblogs (blogs by library people or about libraries, that aren't official blogs) since early summer; several previous posts have referred to that process and asked for help in some cases.

A Hobby/Obsession

None of the blogging books I've self-published has sold enough copies or received enough attention to be considered anything but failures. Consider:

- *Public Library Blogs*–80 copies sold.
- *Academic Library Blogs*—45 copies sold.

In these two cases, while I did an easy followup after one year and might do another easy followup after three years, I've given up on the projects. They just don't interest me enough to keep working on them if nobody much cares about the results and I continue to have the impression that only cheerleading is welcome in this area.

- *The Liblog Landscape*–65 copies sold to date, most recently one copy in June 2010.
- *But Still They Blog*–17 (seventeen) copies sold to date, most recently two copies in June 2010.

I think *BSTB* is the better of the two books. I'd had the suggestion that some people with blogs in one of the books might want to see where they stood, but couldn't/wouldn't cough up $35 (print) or $25 (PDF). Maybe I could offer individual profiles for some nominal sum?

I've tested that. I lowered the price of the two books to $10 PDF—no shipping and handling, and since they're 6×9 pages they should look great on a Kindle DX or iPad or whatever ereader you have with a decent-size screen. I lowered the print price to $20 (which yields the same return to me for each book as $10 PDF, within a few cents).

Total additional sales so far of either book to any bloggers or anybody else: Zero.

And yet…I couldn't just let this one go, curse a little, and abandon the field. So, at this point, I have to admit that carrying on this "universe of liblogs over time" study is a hobby or obsession; any fiscal rewards (or, hah, speaking engagements) are unlikely and secondary.

People Will Read If It's Completely Free

Now consider another set of figures:

- *Public Library Blogs*: 2,244 (or 1,111) to September 30, 2010–and 2,902 (or 1,010) for a brief update.
- *Academic Library Blogs*: 2,186 (or 1,053) to September 30, 2010–and 3,178 (or 1,286) for a brief update.
- *The Liblog Landscape*: 1,424 to September 30, 2010.
- *But Still They Blog*: 813 through October 11, 2010—less than two months so far.

Those are the numbers for the partial versions of the books that appeared in *Cites & Insights*. (For the first two, the larger number adds HTML pageviews for the article to PDF downloads for the issue; the number in parentheses is HTML pageviews. The third and fourth are PDF-only full-issue articles.)

I've reached about 28 times as many readers for public library blogs, 48 times as many for academic library blogs, roughly 22 times as many (so far) for the first liblog study and, even after only seven weeks, 47 times as many readers for *But Still They Blog*.

It Probably Works Better as a Book

The Liblog Landscape 2007-2010 has a lot more data than the earlier projects. That data needs to be turned into summaries, graphs, and lots of descriptive commentary. The graphs–particularly correlation scattergraphs–work better in a 6×9″ book (where I use a 26pica wide body, 4 1/3″ if you don't get picas) than in one column of a 2-column 8.5×11″ ejournal (where I use a 20pica body or 3 1/3″). I had to omit columns from some tables and make type in other tables uncomfortably small to fit them in three-quarters of the width.

And, let's face it, even without the individual blog profiles that make up more than half of each previous book, this is going to be fairly long. The concise *C&I* version of *But Still They Blog* is a 60-page issue. I'd expect the new one to be even larger, given an additional year of data, more than twice as many blogs and a couple of new and interesting metrics.

Possibilities

I see three possibilities. I'd be interested in feedback or possibilities I haven't thought of (don't bother with "scrap it, nobody cares"—if I was that sensible I would have scrapped it before I began).

- **The Insane Approach**: Do it the same way I've done it before, as a 6×9 book priced reasonably, with some excerpts published in *C&I*—and, maybe, publishing a truncated version in *C&I* ~~if~~ when the book doesn't do very well. (Why insane? Surely you know the definition of insanity attributed to Albert Einstein: "Doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.")

- **The Populist Approach**: Do the project as a series of *C&I* articles (probably PDF-only, given the graphs) over as many issues as it requires. Maybe try to put together a summary that could be sold as an article in one of the "big trade journals" (*LJ*, *AL*, *CIL*) for a three-figure sum. Lots of readership, either very little or no revenue (barring sponsorship, which is still up in the air).
- **A Blended Approach?** Do the project as a series of *C&I* articles that become a book, with the book planned as a limited edition. In that case, the "PDF versions" of individual articles might be 6×9 pages for easier reading on ereaders and better graph reproductions.

Either the second or third approach probably means using ten to twenty pages of each issue over four to eight months for this particular project. That might be good; it might not.

Reactions? Comments? Anybody out there ready to provide overall sponsorship for this project? Anybody out there who forgot to buy a cheap copy of one of the two current books? (There's still time–and note that none of these alternatives includes individual blog profiles.)

To Make Things More Complicated

Let's throw in three other factors, things I'm certainly thinking about:

1. If I continue the study in 2011, it would represent a half-decade investigation, which has some interesting possibilities.
2. There's another interesting five-year anniversary coming up in early 2011–five years after the publication of by far the most widely-read *C&I* ever. I'm thinking about a major update and a possible five-year book edition; that may turn out to be a really stupid idea.
3. I have a collection of columns that most of you haven't read, the "disContent" columns from *EContent Magazine*, all of them now updated to match the published versions and with Update epilogues for each column. The whole collection includes a number of columns that I'd just as soon forget, cases that make it clear that I'm no better as a prophet than anyone else in the field–but it might be interesting to include all the columns in a strictly limited (and possibly hardback) "signed edition" book. The portion of the columns that I regard as still timely and still things I'm happy to have out there is going to find use somehow—possibly republished in future C&Is (if it keeps going long enough–there are either 37 columns and 43,000 words or 47 columns and 56,000 words in that category) or as a much smaller book.

I'd welcome comments on those factors as well.

The CD-ROM Project
From Print to CD

There's a common theme for the three titles this time around: Converting print to CD-ROM, presumably adding value in the process.

The first "disc" this time around is the biggest box in my stack of CD-ROMs: a yellow 9"x9"x6.5" box containing ten inner boxes and a total of 32 CD-ROMs, plus an instruction book (and a 33rd CD mailed later, in a case designed to be added to the tenth box). In my March 1998 *Library Hi Tech News* review, I called it "the most seriously flawed product I've ever given an excellent rating."

The Complete National Geographic

One box per decade, three or four CD-ROMs per box. It's not *quite* complete—they left out all those glorious wall-size supplemental maps—but it does include all the covers, all the photos, all the text and, significantly, all the ads.

Back then, I said the collection was at "an extremely low price" and that I couldn't imagine a school library that wouldn't benefit from a copy—"and for that matter, most public and academic libraries should have this set as well." That extremely low price? $199 retail, $140 street price.

Before I reviewed this, I'd seen list posts from librarians saying they'd tried to use the set recently and it didn't work on their computers. When I looked at the system requirements, I was discouraged: Windows 3.1 or 95 (or Macintosh). Mindscape distributed the product, and recent experiences with Mindscape discs of that era have been mixed. But hey, it wouldn't hurt to try.

It Works—At Least Mostly

This is an unusual set in that you can install it from *any* of the CD-ROMs and register the set as a whole from any CD-ROM in the first box (registration isn't necessary). The install required 10MB

disk space or, if you wanted searches to run with any speed, 100MB disc space (the extra 90MB for the index). That reduces the storage capacity of each disc—it appears that disc-specific content runs about 500MB per CD.

Following Windows 95 instructions (or, rather, opening Explorer and double-clicking on Setup.Exe), the installation routine ran smoothly. I chose not to attempt to install 16-bit QuickTime: As far as I know, the only videos are in the startup intro, mostly ads and promotions and irrelevant to the content. I also chose not to install a link to online content or register the set.

With installation complete—the install routine grumped about my decision not to install QT, but didn't fail—the set started right up. Searches work, prompts to change CDs work, page displays work, printing works.

I didn't have to invoke compatibility settings. Things worked as well now as they did back in 1998—for good and for bad. Note that, except for the intro, there is no sound or video anywhere on this set but, quoting from my 1998 review, "Then again, how many video clips and sound samples did you encounter in *National Geographic*?"

The Good

Assuming you don't have shelves groaning with the full set of print magazines, and maybe even if you do, this set had a lot to recommend it. You could browse by cover and table of contents, but you could also search articles, pictures *and ads* with a moderately sophisticated search engine. The inclusion of ads in the search base make this set a valuable resource for some forms of social history—seeing how things were advertised in a given era to a presumably desirable demographic, *National Geographic* subscribers.

It's not full text—while indexing seems fairly deep, it's all added terms. Back in 1998, I was fascinated by some early searches—for example, the 120 ads for "computers" go back as far as 1970.

And the pictures are great.

The Less Good

There are three problems here: One very much present in the original set, two more a factor of changing times.

The original problem becomes obvious if you know math. The set contains more than 190,000 pages, all scanned as color images. Each page results in a JPEG image from less than 50kB to around 80kB; that means compression ratios of 90:1 to 250:1 assuming 300dpi scans, which may not be a safe assumption.

The result? Photos look good—after all, JPEG is ideal for color photography. Quoting myself: "The pictures are drop-dead gorgeous, even if some tiny details may be obscured." As for article text and pages mixing photos and text, well... JPEG isn't really designed for text, and the results are less than wonderful. Some early issues are difficult to read and some pages with pictures and italic text may be wholly unreadable. My printed sample, this time around, is readable hard on the eyes—it's about what you'd expect from heavily-compressed JPEGs of text pages.

I *think* I found the on-screen text a little easier to read than last time around, and that's probably because of improved displays and maybe better smoothing algorithms.

The next problem was always there but wasn't as bizarre in 1997. Namely, the primary interface comes up as a proper window—but at a fixed 640x480 resolution, with the maximize button grayed out (and no ability to use handles to change size). Remember 640x480? Know just how small that looks on a contemporary 1280x1024 display? It's a little box, appearing smaller than it really is.

If you use the zoom control, the page or two-page spread currently being displayed *does* use more of the screen. I could get it to use 1280x800 but not 1280x1024. I couldn't get the zoomed display to stay on my preferred screen when changing pages, but that's unlikely to be an issue for most library uses. When you're looking at pictures or trying to read articles, the display's pretty good; when you're searching, not so much—the small box comes back. Oh, by the way, you have to exit Zoom mode to print: the only controls in Zoom mode are page controls and, fortunately, rotation controls (since some maps are printed sideways).

The other problem (or pair of problems) is a factor of changing times. It seems clunky to have to keep changing CD-ROMs (and with a notebook computer, it *is* clunky and noisy as well). And these days the lack of a full-text index also seems clunky: How quickly we grow spoiled.

Still, what's here is quite good. I gave it a 93 (Excellent) back then. "The producers weren't able to overcome the real limitations of digital imaging

techniques," but what they did was pretty remarkable for 1997.

Contemporary Alternatives

You can still buy a version of the CD-ROM set, apparently using a separate installation CD and costing $85 new, $18 and up used. It's from Riverdeep, which seems to have ended up with Learning Company assets. If I can believe the Amazon reviews (always a big **If**), the last release screws up several other things. I'd avoid it.

You've probably seen ads for the more plausible current version: A six-DVD set that uses PDF rather than JPEG and costs $50 from Amazon at this writing. It also includes another decade, covering 1888 through 2008 (another newer version may be out), and includes some of the supplementary maps and a bonus DVD with videos on National Geographic Society and the like. I haven't seen or used the new product. It's clearly a much slicker interface. I've heard and read mixed reviews on the quality of the search engine and the page images. It does appear that you can download the entire set to hard disk, which would make the collection a lot easier to use.

Or, for that matter, you can *buy* the whole thing on a 160GB external USB hard disk directly from National Geographic, but that will run $200. (The society also sells the 6-DVD-ROM edition for $70, in a version that includes 2009 issues and a book.) It's the same content as the DVD-ROM edition but already on hard disk, with room for some updates and 100GB set aside for your own data.

Again, I haven't tried any of the newer versions and can't speak to their quality. If I felt the desire for a complete set of *National Geographic Magazine*, I'd probably spring for the DVD-ROM. By the way, you may also find one or two pre-1923 issues in Google Books. If you do, the image quality is likely to be *much* better than what I saw on the CD-ROMs, but you'll be dealing with a handful of issues at best.

Octavo CD-ROM Editions

I received four (or more) review copies of Octavo CD-ROM editions and reviewed two of them—Andrea Palladio's *I Quattro Librari dell'Architectura* (1570) and Giovanni Battista Bracelli's *Bizzarie di Varie Figure* (1624) in the final "CD-ROM Corner," in *EContent* 23:6 (December 2000). I probably gave away the other CD-ROMs but still have Domenico Fontana's *Della Trasportatione dell'Obelisco Vaticano* (1590)—which I must have received in 2002, since that's the date on the license. As you can probably guess, the book is about the transportation of the obelisk in St. Peter's Square—not the *original* transportation from Egypt to Rome (in 37AD), but the movement of a 340-ton object 260 yards in 1585.

I rated the Octavo items "very good" in 2000, but wondered "just how large the market is" for these extremely high-quality scans of rare books from LC's Rare Books and Special Collections Division, "particularly given the reluctance of so many academic libraries to deal with CD-ROM media."

I'm not sure how much the Fontana sold for, but the others sold for $25 to $45. They're superb reproductions of rare books, with translations and scholarly notes included. The actual scans are at roughly 300dpi, full color and clearly done with great care; the CD-ROM presents book pages at 144dpi. (The translation and other modern material are nicely typeset.) The whole thing is one big PDF—151MB in this case. The translation is searchable. The original is not, since it's just a set of page images—but there are hyperlinks from the translation. Some Octavo editions apparently have "live" text behind the scanned pages.

From what I could see under Windows 7 (where Autorun brings up Explorer), there's no installation problem because there's no installation—you open the PDF directly from the disc or copy it to hard disk for faster operation. The user interface is Adobe Reader itself.

Contemporary Availability

Amazon still sells this item, for $30. Worldcat.org shows nine holding libraries and shows 62 Octavo titles in all, with holdings ranging as high as 2,286 (for *The works now newly imprinted*, otherwise known as the Kelmscott Chaucer). In the first 20 items in Worldcat, I see at least three with more than a thousand holdings, so it appears that some Octavo CD-ROMs are widely held. If your library has any of these Octavo special editions, they should work at least as well now as they did back then. And, after all, how else would your library obtain a high-quality copy of *Areopagitica* (1644) or Isaac Newton's *Opticks* in its original edition or Palladio's 1570 architectural treatise (held by 1,988 Worldcat libraries)?

Amazon shows 45 Octavo CD-ROMs as currently available, at prices ranging from $20 to $80 (for the Gutenberg Bible) and release dates as recent as 2005. Octavo itself is still around, or at least it has a website at octavo.com (although most pages are only updated to 2005). That site shows a bundle of "each Octavo edition published to date," which totals 45 titles; the price for the whole set is $1,311. There are also smaller bundles, usually representing a modest discount from buying individual CD-ROMs.

Here's where it gets interesting (thanks to Wikipedia's brief article): Rare Book Room (www.rarebookroom.org) has some 400 books digitized by Octavo—and it's a free site, an "education site intended to allow the visitor to examine and read some of the great books of the world." All items are available in a reading interface that shows thumbnails of each spread and a modest reproduction of a given spread—but can be enlarged to be more than large enough for reading or careful examination. Some items have accompanying PDF files offering notes on the edition. (Zoom seems to operate in several steps, by clicking on a spread. It appears that you can zoom in at least as far as on the CD-ROMs, maybe further.)

This is quite an extraordinary gift from Octavo, although the Rare Book Room versions don't include translations and extensive scholarly notes. That leaves a market for the CD-ROMs.

In case you're wondering, this book is *not* available in Google Books, at least not when I checked in late September 2010—and, even if it was, I doubt that the scan would be as careful and high quality as the Octavo product.

I was always impressed with the CD-ROMs, even as I felt they might be awfully obscure. But 2,000+ copies of a CD-ROM is pretty good, and the Rare Book Room makes these treasures available to everybody, albeit without the translations and other ancillary materials. Good stuff.

Joy of Cooking

It seems that I never reviewed this 1998 CD, and I have it as a plain CD in an ordinary jewelcase, so it might have been part of a 10-pak.

Installation and Operation

Autorun does nothing at all—inspecting autorun.inf, it appears that it's circular: It tells Autorun to run Autorun. Sigh. Doubleclicking on Setup.exe *does* work, with a typical InstallShield setup copying almost 50MB to hard disk. It then says it needs to restart Windows. So, let's see.

It works—there's a "Joy" icon and doubleclicking it brings up a full-screen, unmovable, non-resizable window with the name, but also a little dialog box that says you need to insert the CD-ROM and "try again." You should *never* have to exit a program, insert the CD-ROM and then restart the program. Even after copying 50MB from a disc that only has 150MB total, you need the CD-ROM to use it.

Doing that, I get the same non-resizable, unmovable window, but with a menu. Playing with the menu, I found little to suggest significant added value over the print book and a lot to suggest the print classic is better. *Joy of Cooking,* for many of us, is more about "cooking facts" and food facts and techniques than about recipes as such. The reading pane on the CD-ROM makes reading even short essays much clunkier, even if you like the (unchangeable) boring typeface: The book wins in this regard.

Recipes? Maybe you can search by ingredient, but the recipe presentation is also harder to use than the print book. And while a bunch'o'recipes on CD-ROM might have been hot stuff in 1998, it's badly superseded in 2010 by—you got it—the web.

I'm guessing I wasn't enthralled back then. Now? I uninstalled it.

Contemporary Alternatives

If you're so inclined, you can buy a newer CD-ROM version (*Joy of Cooking 2.0*) for $12 or so (or, under another listing, $207!). It dates from 2002. I'm not sure why you would. Apparently there's still no nutritional analysis or anything that would make this a contemporary computer product.

If you like the style of *Joy*, you might go to *the joy kitchen.com* (www.thejoykitchen.com), run by the Joy of Cooking Trust. It has a variety of tips, techniques and recipes and explains the timeline of the book—including the decade during which it was "publisher driven" before returning to "JOY style" in 2006.

I suspect most folks will stick with sites like Epicurious (more than 100,000 recipes from several magazines) and many other online recipe sites. There have been (and no doubt still are) other CD-ROMs and, probably, DVD-ROMs devoted to cooking and recipes, most of them with things like

preparation videos and nutritional analysis. In the end, the *Joy* CD-ROM didn't do enough to make it better than the book.

The Zeitgeist

Blogging Groups and Ethics

Do you blame Roy Tennant when the Annoyed Librarian writes posts that undermine librarianship and libraries?

I'm guessing you don't. Whoever the *Library Journal* incarnation of the Annoyed Librarian might or might not be, I'm certain Roy isn't part of it. But his blog is part of the same group—the group of paid blogs on the *LJ* website. Does that result in guilt by association?

I know my answer: No, that would be absurd. Which makes one story in this collection interesting because it involves a similar form of guilt by association, in a very different group where most bloggers *aren't* paid for their posts. The story involves science but also librarians. It involves me, very indirectly—and it may have implications for what library-related bloggers should consider for the future.

Some of you have already figured out the story I'm referring to: ScienceBlogs and Pepsico. Many of you haven't and won't much care. While one focus here is on that series of events and its possible implications, I'm adding discussion of posts that might be vaguely related or wholly unrelated but that I find relevant to the title above—including a few notes about blogging lists and awards.

The title above could be read a couple of different ways, especially if you add punctuation. Is it about blogging, groups, and ethics? Not really—but it may be about blogging groups and blogging ethics as well as blogging in general. And, since some discussions of blogging ethics took place on blogs that are members of blogging groups—and may have changed groups over the past year or so—it all takes on an Ourobouros feel.

The ScienceBlogs Flap

Seed Magazine started ScienceBlogs, a network of several dozen science blogs united by banner ads (and *loads* of sidebar ads), tabs for various "channels" and both a common primary domain and the use of TypePad. There have been some great blogs on ScienceBlogs (where bloggers are known as "Sciblings"), including a handful of information science bloggers such as John Dupuis.

> Full disclosure: I was briefly part of the ScienceBlogs (SB) community, by invitation—partly because I thought *Walt at Random* might reach more people, partly because (let's be honest here) SB offered potential pay once you reached certain pageview levels, levels that—based on my own log analysis as done by Urchin at LISHost—would yield enough income to be significant for a mostly-retired writer. Why "briefly"? Because Google Analytics as implemented at SB showed me with less than 5% of the pageviews I had at LISHost—numbers so pathetically low that I'd never see a dime and wondered whether anybody was reading at all. Also because it didn't take long to learn to despise TypePad's editing tools and, by contrast, learn to appreciate WordPress' WYSIWYG mode. I moved to ScienceBlogs on June 13, 2009—and moved back on September 17, 2009. My pageviews returned to normal (but when I tried Google Analytics at *Walt at Random*, they dove back to almost nothing). None of which has anything to do with the saga that follows.

On July 6, 2010, SB launched *Food Frontiers*, "a blog sponsored by PepsiCo." The move was not well received, to put it mildly. A day later, SB had added a big disclaimer on the sponsored blog, added a banner saying "advertorial" and started looking for "other graphical and technological changes that will further distinguish these kinds of blogs from those of independent bloggers, so that our readers can fully evaluate the merits of each." If you read the July 7, 2010 post at *Page 3.14* explaining these changes, you'll see a fair number of comments indicating that they weren't enough—that some (many?) Sciblings felt that the presence of this sponsored blog undermined the credibility of their own blogs on the same site. On July 8, "A Note from ScienceBlogs" on *Page 3.14* announced, "We have removed Food Frontiers from SB."

A three-day wonder? Not so much. I didn't pick up on it until mid-July, and the consequences of that briefly present ad/blog continue through this writing, at least indirectly. A few items:

- Some SB bloggers left or threatened to leave, making their reasons very clear. It appears that more than a quarter of the Sciblings departed within a day or two, including

some of the highest profiles. Many have now joined new science blog groups, one of them—Scientopia—formed as a collective of science bloggers, many if not most of them bloggers who left SB. You'll find a good set of early links on departures and changes at coturnix.wordpress.com/2010/07/10/the-pepsigate-linkfest/ and an interesting piece of inside-baseball humor at phylogenomics.blogspot.com/2010/07/pz-myers-will-reveal-his-decision-on.html.

- Dorothea Salo founded a new blog, *The Book of Trogool*, on SB during the brief period I was there—and wrote "Small fry, blogging networks, and reputation" on July 8, 2010 at that blog. At the time, she and her cobloggers hadn't made a decision—but eventually they did. She has much to say about blogging within librarianship—and it's sobering, if not directly related to this flap:

  > [L]ibrarianship is a very difficult profession to blog in. It doesn't *like* blogs or bloggers, or social media generally, much less trust them or those who engage with each other and the world using them. Because libraries and librarians feel beleaguered, they *especially* don't like discourse critical of libraries or librarianship in social media coming from one of their own. Library *vendors* aren't fond of critical discourse in librarian blogs either. For individual librarian bloggers or public social-media figures, this has absolutely meant trouble at work. I'm one example, but very far from the only one—and I earned my problems more than most folks I know in similar straits.
  >
  > This leaves the beleaguered library blogger who wishes to continue to blog with a few options. One is to be part of a group blog to create strength in numbers; *In the Library with the Lead Pipe* is a sterling example (and a fabulous blog; if you're interested in libraries from the inside, this is not one to miss). Another is to adopt some of the trappings of the formal library professional literature, such as length, exclusivity, and beta-reading-oops-I-meant-peer-review. ItLwtLP does this as well. A third option is to find a blog home with enough accumulated strength of character and good reputation as to afford some protection—and now you know why I chose ScienceBlogs.

That's just part of the post. It's worth reading...at its new address as part of Scientopia Blogs (in her case, scientopia.org/blogs/bookoftrogool/). Of the others in "Information Science" who'd been on SB when I was there, Christina Pikas also moved *Christina's LIS Rant* to Scientopia—and John Dupuis kept *Confessions of a Science Librarian* at SB, explaining why in the tersely eloquent "Pepsigate: Yes, I'm staying" (posted July 12, 2010).

- Bora Zivkovic, "Coturnix" of *A Blog Around the Clock*, wrote his departure post on July 19, 2010—having taken longer than some, partly because SB was "a big part of my life" for four years. The post is more than 8,200 words long and I'm not ready to summarize either the detailed history of science blogging or his other comments. For many people, BZ's departure was extremely important—and if I'd still been on SB, it would have mattered to me as well. Or, as John Dupuis put it: "Bora = ScienceBlogs. Bora = science blogging."
- David Appell wrote an odd commentary on "Pepsigate" in the July 20, 2010 *Guardian*: "PepsiCo and the shame of the bloggerati." Shame? Yep. According to Appell, Pepsi was "hounded out" by the "bloggerati," "a shameful response from nearly all parties involved" and "suppression of free speech." I missed the part where Sciblings said PepsiCo employees should be denied the ability to blog anywhere and I've missed the new legal principle that a private entity can "censor" by failing to continue accepting paid commentary. Appell may be right—that is, a "conversation" between PepsiCo and SB readers might have been revealing—but saying PepsiCo was "chased by a mob" is hyperbolic nonsense. Perhaps UK commentators don't understand that "freedom of speech" does not guarantee a platform; at least in the US, I can't go to a publisher and say, "If you don't publish my rants, *you're a censor*." Well, I can—and I can be escorted out of the place when the publisher stops laughing. (In fact, *Food Frontiers* was and is published on PepsiCo's own blog platform.)
- Anne-Marie Deitering posted "Word of the day: Advertorial" on July 20, 2010 at *infofetishist*. As she notes, there's nothing new about advertorials (and magazines and newspapers have different standards for how strongly they're labeled as such), and is unhappy because (attempted) advertorials "are wrecking one of my favorite places to go on the Internet," namely SB. It's a striking

essay with additional links, including one to a *Columbia Journalism Review* discussion.

- Bringing the discussion up to date, you might want to check Bora's "Thank you!" post on July 22, 2010; Cameron Neylon's discussion of "The Nature of Science Blog Networks" on July 25, 2010 at *Science in the Open* (cameronneylon.net/blog/)—which includes a faulty projection that "there won't be" a new science blogging network; another long, thoughtful post from Bora (5,500 words) on July 27, 2010, "Science Blogging Networks: What, Why and How"; and various posts as Scientopia started operations. Consider, for example, "Welcome back!" on August 2, 2010 at *Book of Trogool*...or, for that matter, John Dupuis' "Scientopia: A new kind of online science blogging community" on August 4, 2010, written from his new position as the sole remaining librarian blogger at ScienceBlogs.

There's more to it than ScienceBlogs and Scientopia, of course. Nature has a small set of independently written blogs. *Wired* seems to be starting a science blogging network. *Discover* hosts blogs. There's a Science 2.0 blog network. And, as introduced on August 20, 2010 by BZ, there's now Scienceblogging.org, "Your one-stop shop for the most recent science blogging," an aggregator hosting feeds from SB, Scientopia, Discover, Scientific American blogs, PLoS blogs and many more—perhaps too many to be a coherent operation. It will be interesting to see how this works out.

Should Liblogs Have Groups?

I added the heading above when I was outlining this essay. I'm not sure there's much to say.

There are such groups, to be sure—groups of bookbloggers (not all librarians), the LJ and SLJ "groups," those who have blogs on their *LISNews* accounts and probably more I'm not aware of. What there aren't, as far as I know, are networks of the nature of Scientopia or ScienceBlogs. There have certainly been groups or rings of library blogs with various forms of self-identification and navigation, but those don't seem to be particularly healthy, and relatively few of the more prominent blogs are part of such rings or lists.

Would a liblog group make sense? How would it work? What advantages would better-known and lesser-known liblogs see in a group? How would it be administered? What would make it worthwhile—for bloggers and for readers?

I don't have answers. Maybe there aren't any. Apparently lots of readers had the ScienceBlogs "last 24 hours" page as a home page of sorts, going there to see what's new in science blogging. When I want to see what's new in liblogs, I bring up Google Reader (I much preferred Bloglines, but that's gone away), usually finding 40 to 80 posts over the last 24 hours—from a range of some 500 blogs. Would I switch to a group page? Would you?

Awards and Lists

You've probably seen the lists. If you have a liblog, there's a good chance you've been on one of them. My odd little blog, Walt at Random, has been on several—including a prime example, "The Top Fifty Library Blogs," posted April 21, 2009 at *GetDegrees.com*. It's fairly typical of the breed: A list that praises a fair number of blogs—and appears on one or more of many sites that all relate to commercial higher education and are typically sponsored by some of the big for-profit institutions.

The list itself is no better or worse than others of its kind. It's a little unusual in that it includes as one of the "top fifty" blogs one that has a name I refuse to print here (not personal animosity, just language) and has ten "blogs" that aren't blogs at all, but rather Twitter handles. Oh, and one of the fifty was (and I think is) primarily lots of numbered lists of resources...and appears on a site primarily devoted to online education, primarily represented by for-profit institutions. The worm Ourobouros again comes to mind.

Some of us who appear on these lists believe that the lists primarily exist so that we'll link back to them, thus bringing lots more people to these sites touting for-profit colleges. I've never provided that link love but many have, and quite a few who *aren't* on the lists seem to think the lists are meaningful and link to the posts.

Is this an ethical issue? I'm not sure. I've seen enough dead and nearly-dead blogs on some lists to suspect they're not the result of painstaking current evaluation and research (and, frankly, I'm unwilling to buy that some of those on the April 2009 list could be part of *The* top 50 liblogs, if such a beast existed). I regard it as a form of linkspamming; others clearly do not.

It turns out to be hard to discuss these sites and lists without getting into trouble of one sort or another, especially if you do link to the original post. To take an example from 2009, Steven Bell posted "These Predictions Throw Caution to the Wind" on August 3, 2009 at *ACRLog*—a tongue-in-cheek commentary on "25 Predictions for the University of the Future," which appeared on associatedegree.org. (Sense a pattern in these URLs?) He found the list laughable, at least partly because so many of the "predictions" were for things that are well-established reality in today's higher education. He added some far-out futuristic predictions along the same lines: All predictions that *might* have been futuristic in 1995, but have the same predictive value in 2009 that I would have in saying that a self-identified black man might be elected President. And, sigh, some people took his post seriously or took it as an opportunity to warn us about "affiliate sites," all these sites that link to elearners.com (but are not actually run by elearners.com). Bell posted a followup, "I Never Fell Off the Turnip Wagon," on August 11, 2009, noting that he fully understood the nature of these sites and lists.

A related August 3, 2010 post at *Ellie <3 Libraries* (ellieheartslibraries.wordpress.com) notes the issues with affiliate sites:

> I suppose I am hyper aware because I have an ex who used to design these things, but I'm still shocked every time I encounter someone (or at least a professional) who doesn't know about affiliate sites...
>
> Both this site (http://associatedegree.org) and Learngasm—who has the top 100 blogs post going around currently (www.bachelorsdegreeonline.com)—are sites designed solely to earn revenue through click-throughs...
>
> All of the links to request more information on any of the schools on either of those sites are affiliate links e.g https://search.collegedegrees.com/forms/university-of-phoenix/publisher/bachelorsdegreeonline
>
> The "bachelorsdegreeonline" at the end is a tracking mechanism to allow collegedegrees.com to reward sites that send them visitors. Just like libraries can send people to Amazon and get a kickback. The difference is libraries are trying be helpful—these sites are not.
>
> While all the schools linked to are legitimate schools, both are misleading sites since they only link to schools that offer an affiliate kickback. They also only link to forms to enter your contact information at third party sites, not to the actual school websites.
>
> **While the content of the top 100 blogs and 25 predictions lists is completely non-objectionable, the fact that librarians are taking these sites seriously is**. [Emphasis added.]

It's not just librarians. *Wired* blogs have linked to some of the many blog lists at these sites as though they were legitimate "top 25" or "top 100" selections. (There's more to the August 3 post, worth reading directly.) On the other hand, *The ADL Librarian* did a nice takedown on August 6, 2010 of yet another list along these lines, "100 Best Blogs for Librarians of the Future" on bachelorsdegreeonline. This writer noted what I've also noted but haven't written about, because I've generally chosen to ignore such lists altogether: Namely, that the lists tend to include blogs that aren't current, which *strongly* suggests they're not evaluated carefully.

As a general rule, any time you see a post that promises some number of "Top" library blogs in any specialty or in general, start by looking at the site. If it's one of the many that exist primarily to promote for-profit online education, take the list itself with an unusually large helping of skepticism. There's nothing inherently wrong with for-profit education, online education or both (assuming accreditation and that the institutions aren't loan mills). But, well, I'm not willing to say what "The" top 50 or top 25 or top 100 library blogs are, and I'm guessing I know a whole lot more about the field than almost anybody putting these lists together. I can identify the 50 most prolific bloggers for a given period, but quantity isn't quality—and I don't believe there is or can be *one* list of "the" fifty most important blogs in the field.

The Salem Press List and Awards

Quite a few of us—several hundred, I believe—received email from Salem Press along these lines:

> Congratulations. Your blog has been nominated for a Library Blog Award by readers of it. You should be thrilled so many think so much of what you have to say.

I say "us" advisedly: Yes, just as *Walt at Random* has been on some of those numbered "top" lists, it was one of several hundred liblogs and library blogs in the running for these awards. It didn't win one of the modest cash awards (for the top three blogs in each of five categories), but it is one of the

gold-starred blogs in the "General Library Blogs" list, and I find that I'm in good company there. (Salem Press put the blog in a different category, but corrected that when I asked about it.)

Does *Walt at Random* now carry a badge saying that it's a gold-star Salem Press blog? No, and neither do most others. Checking the sixteen winners (there was a tie in one case), I find that *none* of the General winners display a badge but one third-place "quirky" blog does, as do the first-place "academic library" blog, the first and second-place "public library" blogs and the first and second-place "school library" blogs. That's six out of sixteen; the majority of winners have chosen not to add badges.

Salem Press got some publicity by doing this award, but it also put together some good lists. I found the lists a valuable addition to my 2010 liblog project, locating a fair number of blogs I hadn't otherwise encountered.

Steven Bell posted "Thanks But No Thanks Salem Press" on March 28, 2010 at *Designing Better Libraries*. He's not interested: "The only award I need is to know that DBL has readers who find value in our posts." He thinks the profession could do without award proliferation and that awards tend to go to "the same old blogs time and time again." He suggests rejecting the enticement to enter the competition—but, in fact, Salem Press wasn't inviting bloggers to enter a competition, merely informing us that we were already candidates.

> This isn't a critique of Salem Press. I understand their desire to recognize the good work of librarians and bring it attention, and I respect their good intentions. I just wonder if there's a better way to do it than establishing one more unproductive competition.

Bell finds particular value in LISNews' annual "Blogs to Read" list—and maybe I shouldn't cite that, since I'm on the 2010 set of ten.

And here things get interesting. While *DBL* didn't win, a different Bell blog *did* win third place, which he found odd since it's a "filter blog." He donated the cash award to a librarian scholarship fund. Comments on the post are interesting and revealing, including one from the lead judge at Salem Press who suggested they should be something like "Library Blog Huzzahs" rather than awards as such. Were the winners the usual suspects? Not really. While one award is puzzling (a blog that doesn't seem to belong in its category) and one third-place winner will, for good reason, show up in every Top X Liblog list, several of the awards are for lesser-known blogs.

I like the idea of "Library Blog Huzzahs." I'm generally unhappy with "The Top X Blogs" lists on for-profit educational affiliate blogs. I don't believe there's any way to avoid rankings and grades: that's the way the world works, and I've done my part. But my liblog studies specifically point out blogs that stand out in one particular metric; there isn't, and shouldn't be, any sense of "these are the *best* blogs" or "these are the *most important* blogs." Indeed, one metric that I've carefully avoided listing blogs for is Google Page Rank (I say how many liblogs have high values, but not which blogs those are), and that avoidance will continue.

I love encountering a new liblog where the blogger has something interesting to say. The *lists* that accompanied Salem Press's awards led me to more than a handful of such liblogs. I count that as a good thing.

Blogging Ethics and Considerations

Should you think about ethical considerations for your blog? Probably, at least once in a while. Should you state those considerations? Couldn't hurt—as long as you're telling the truth. Should you pledge to follow somebody else's set of ethics—and display a badge or ribbon or something to indicate that pledge? That's a different issue entirely, one that comes up from time to time and always makes me uneasy.

Doug Johnson's "Blue Skunk Seal of Approval," a July 11, 2008 post at *The Blue Skunk Blog*, falls into the former category. Excerpts from Johnson's own guidelines (which is illustrated with the Seal of approval, sunning itself on the rocks)—noting that Johnson is a school librarian:

- I will not endorse or mention a product (at least without a heavy-duty disclaimer) which I don't have experience using in our district. This is important. While the product itself might look very cool, it's only through experience that one learns about little things like support, compatibility, bug fixes, situational customizations, and unintended consequences of use...
- I will not accept any form of remuneration for reviewing or writing about a product... This includes trips, gifts, cash, cars, call girls or dic-

tatorships of small countries. Not that any of these things have actually been offered to me.

- I don't take paid advertising on my blog or website.
- I don't wear t-shirts, baseball caps, or underwear with corporate logos. (I do have a hip flask with the ALA logo on it, however.)
- I do write "blurbs" for books and/or products that I've actually read or used and liked.
- I try to keep my recommendations my personal recommendations—not the school district's.

He offers the disclaimer that, for the right price, "I would probably say just about anything." He suggests the right price might be around $100K, offers an old but appropriate joke and notes the virtues of working in a field where the temptations aren't that tempting. (My guess is that Johnson is exaggerating his willingness to be bought, but what do I know?) Note what Johnson does *not* say—for example, he doesn't say he wouldn't take a vendor's meal or drinks, but he doesn't accept quid pro quos. More importantly, he's stating *his* code, not proposing that other people should follow it.

Blogging to grow ideas: weblog research ethics

I can't skip over this June 12, 2009 post by Lilia Efimova on *Mathemagenic*. It's an excerpt from Efimova's blogging-related dissertation and reconstructs "events, readings and weblog posts that shaped my understanding of the research ethics." Go read it in the original.

Doing the right thing online: a survey of bloggers' ethical beliefs and practices

I'm not sure what to make of this article, which appears in the June 2009 *New Media & Society* (nms.sagepub.com/content/11/4/575.abstract). Written by five people at the Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, it "explores the ethical beliefs and practices of two distinct groups of bloggers—personal and non-personal—through a worldwide web survey." The survey, of a "stratified purposive sample of 1224 bloggers," asked about beliefs and practices for truth-telling, attribution, accountability and minimizing bias. The authors conclude that the two groups differ on ethical issues, but both believe attribution is most important and accountability least important—and "bloggers themselves" support a code of blogging ethics.

Really? I can't tell—because this isn't an OA journal, and I'm unwilling to pay $25 for one day's access to the article itself. Ah, but a search of the full title does yield a PDF. Some notes on reading the article:

- Except for passalong invitations, the survey only went to bloggers with email addresses on their blogs.
- "Personal" and "non-personal" is based on one question: "Which one of the following best describes the content of your weblog?' (e.g. 'A kind of personal journal', or 'A non-personal weblog, e.g. topical."
- The survey took place in February 2005; most responses were from the U.S.; 73% were tagged as personal blogs. (Personal bloggers were mostly female and only 22% married; topical bloggers were predominantly male, somewhat older and 41% married.)

Then we get to the heart of the survey and things get tricky—partly because, for both sets of bloggers, the mean scores for each category of ethical belief are within a narrow range. "Personal bloggers valued minimizing harm more than non-personal bloggers"—but while the difference may be statistically significant, it's not a big difference (4.99 vs. 5.35). Similarly, ethical *practices* are all within a narrow range (but they're also self-reported: Would *you* report that you don't give a damn about who you harm?). The authors appear to claim that topical bloggers behave more ethically than personal bloggers, but this is a case where I wonder whether the results mean much of anything.

Do bloggers *really* agree that an ethics code is needed? Turns out "slightly agree" is the best you can do—and even at that, only 56% of personal bloggers and 53% of non-personal bloggers "at least slightly agree" that an ethics code is necessary. And, of course, the bloggers weren't responding to a proposed code—they were responding to the *idea* of a code. The paper says "there was strong (if not enthusiastic) support for an ethics code"; I think that overinterprets the data.

Getting to the appendix, things get even more interesting and questionable. One item for the "truth-telling index" is "I make changes to my previous weblog posts." How on earth can this be considered part of truth-telling? Further down, in the accountability group, is "I correct any misinformation in my weblog"—and if you answer that question affirmatively, you must also answer "I make changes" affirmatively. There are statements that

seem to demand one answer—e.g., "I write abusively about others in my weblog" and "I discriminate against a particular group or groups when I blog." Gee, how would I answer those questions?

I don't see the explicit question or statement regarding an ethics code, so can't comment on it. In general, though, I don't find that this study provides convincing proof that bloggers are ready and eager to embrace a code of ethics. Ah, but here's how a press release on the article leads off: "Whatever their reason for posting their thoughts online, bloggers have a shared ethical code, according to a recent study published in the journal New Media Society, published by SAGE." Well...maybe. Most survey respondents responded to a set of slanted statements in the most acceptable manner: This is scarcely shocking or evidence of a shared code.

The more you track websearch results for something like this, the stranger it gets. One post interprets personal vs. non-personal this way: "Non-personal bloggers (i.e. you're blogging for clients)..." Beep. **Absolutely wrong**, but thanks for playing. Did this blogger actually *read* the article, seemingly a prerequisite for comments? The link is to the abstract, and getting something that wrong suggests that the full article wasn't read. Most items on the web are basically the SAGE press release—indeed, I found no items either through Bing or Google suggesting that anybody had read the article in full. The ethics of commenting on something you haven't actually read? No comment.

Blog with Integrity—take the pledge!

That's Sarah Houghton-Jan's title for a July 28, 2009 post at *LibrarianInBlack*. She's encouraging bloggers to sign up for what's effectively an ethical code at the Blog with Integrity website (www.blogwithintegrity.com).

As these things go, Blog with Integrity is both short and (reasonably) benign. I'd certainly sign up for four of the six clauses without much question, and realistically I'm probably on board for all six. (The two I'm less certain of: One that begins "I treat others respectfully, attacking ideas and not people" and one that goes "I always present my honest opinions to the best of my ability." In the first case, it's a nice idea but I reserve the right to attack a person as the sum of their actions. In the second, I agree that, as a whole, a post should represent my honest opinion, but there's a lot to be said for setting up scenarios whether as strawmen or legitimate positions.)

I'd quote the whole thing so that you could see whether it's so unexceptionable that everyone should take the pledge—but the page has an *explicit* copyright statement (not necessary), does *not* carry a Creative Commons license and has no indication that it's OK for me to quote the whole home page.

The site has sponsors: the Council of Public Relations Firms, Johnson & Johnson, and Wiley. Those firms sponsor webinars on the pledge. At this writing, 4,330 bloggers had signed the pledge. Offhand, I see maybe six liblogs—but also scores of duplicate and triplicate entries, probably hundreds of sites that aren't blogs at all, a whole bunch of mommyblogs and babyblogs and a great many blogs that appear commercial in nature. Six organizations have signed on as supporters—two leading to 404 pages, the rest primarily social marketing or editorial sites. Overall? I'm not impressed.

You know where I'd expect to see a seal saying that a site blogs with integrity? On a blog that does no such thing. I think most readers of *Walt at Random* trust that there's a real Walt Crawford behind the blog and that my principles aren't for sale. I think that's true for most libloggers—I'm fairly certain Doug Johnson's readers aren't looking for a Seal showing that he's actually following a code. But if you are on the take or given to ethical shortcuts, well, wouldn't a nice big seal showing how much integrity you have be a good thing? There's no enforcement mechanism, no way to become aware that Blogger X is lying.

Did I mention mommyblogs? Meredith Farkas wrote "This is not my blogosphere" on November 22, 2009 at *Information Wants To Be Free* discussing these blogs and the extent to which they're being corrupted by compensated reviews, that is, bloggers being paid (by a company) to try out a product and write about it. When she read a post with a disclaimer about being a "compensated" review ("paid" is such a harsh word), she was stunned to find that comments weren't from people horrified by the practice—they were people wanting their own freebies and compensation.

> Little did I know how common this sort of thing was in the mommy-blogging world. Coming from a blog community where compensated reviews are anathema, I have a strong sense of disgust when I see people getting money or perks from a compa-

> ny whose product they are reviewing. It makes me not only not trust what they are writing about that product, but what they write about everything else becomes suspect. So it was surprising to me to see a post like this show up on an otherwise great blog without anyone batting an eyelash (other than to try and win some free stuff).

She looked into mommyblogs a little more and found "tons of bloggers" who will write positive reviews for free products or other compensation. Indeed, BlogHer is in the business of connecting advertisers with female bloggers who will review their products and makes no bones about it. There's a lot more to this post, well worth reading (oh, c'mon, it's Meredith, do I even have to say that?), and it does make me wonder about the large number of mommyblogs on the Blog with Integrity site. Does posting a disclaimer make it OK—if you only post positive reviews?

I commented on the post after another person had noted free CDs for music bloggers:

> Providing review copies of CDs, and books, and DVDs and...back in the day...CD-ROMs is fairly standard practice, and not inherently fraught with ethical problems, given two rules: First, the provider has no expectation that a review will actually appear; Second, the provider has no expectation that the review will be positive. As soon as there's a quid pro quo, it's ethically questionable, no matter how many disclaimers you use. (That's why, in looking for a *Cites & Insights* sponsor, I specifically say "someone in an area that C&I doesn't cover.")

I'll stand by that, although, in practice, the free CD-ROMs I used to receive when I was writing review columns usually didn't come directly from the publishers, but rather through the magazine. The comment after mine is about the Blog with Integrity site—and I wonder about the stated claim that the pledge is "an indication that the person displaying the badge understands the issue and takes it seriously." It's an indication that the person *claims* to understand the issue and take it seriously.

Is Blogging Journalism?

Just to make questions of formal blog guidelines more complicated, consider that question. Is it? Some bloggers claim it is—and if it is, shouldn't they be expected to follow at least as rigorous ethical codes as professional journalists?

Eric Schnell asks "Do conference bloggers and tweeters need to follow media rules?" in a June 4, 2009 post at *The Medium is the Message*. He notes a report from *ScienceInsider* that Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory is amending its policy for meetings to require that scientists who are bloggers follow the same rules as reporters—which, among other things, requires that they get a presenter's OK beforehand if they plan to blog or twitter about a presentation. Schnell quotes a scientist-blogger, Andrew Maynard, on his own considerations and thoughts on the issue. Maynard doesn't believe that bloggers and Twitterers are generally acting as journalists—but does suggest reasonable guidelines for when it is and isn't OK to tweet or blog. It's a complicated issue, particularly given conference presentations that discuss unpublished research results: Is it inappropriate for a blogger to write about such results, but legitimate for the researcher or their institution to issue premature press releases?

The Cold Spring Harbor changes came about because of a specific incident—one in which a scientist (on ScienceBlogs) posted about a conference in ways that a media outlet considered inappropriate. Anthony Fejes wrote about this situation in "The Rights of Science Blogging," a June 4, 2009 post at *Fejes.ca* (or look up "Anthony Fejes," since his blog has moved to a new science blogging group host). Fejes looks at Cold Spring as "trying to suppress blogging, instead of embracing it" and offers some counterpoints you might consider worth reading (noting that library conferences rarely involve issues of this sensitivity or magnitude). For example:

> Unless the conference organizers have explicitly asked each participant to sign a non-disclosure agreement, the conference contents are considered to be a form of public disclosure. This is relevant, not because of the potential for people to talk about it is important, but because legally, this is when the clock starts ticking if you intend to profit from your discovery.

So once you've said something in a public forum, *you're on record*—and bloggers should be free to discuss what you said. "When academics stand up in front of an audience, it's always something that's ready to be broadcast to the world. The fact that it's then being blogged to a larger audience is generally irrelevant at that point."

Fejes considers Cold Spring's argument that "the material being blogged may not be an accurate reflection of the content of the presentation.

His response: "I'm entirely prepared to call B*llsh!t on this point." [Fejes' Bowdlerization—I'm happy to use "Bullshit" without alteration.]

> Given a journalist with a bachelor's degree in general science, possibly a year or two of journalism school and maybe a couple years of experience writing articles and a graduate student with several years of experience tightly focused on the subject of the conference, who is going to write the more accurate article?

Then there's "journalistic control"—the extent to which an institution wishes to assure that "content is presented in a manner befitting the institution at which the conference took place." Fejes doesn't buy this either: "If the quality of the article is good, what right does the institution have to dictate the way it's presented by anyone who attended?" Basically, Fejes says, you either have to have a closed [session] or an open [session]; you can't hold different attendees to different standards. Then there's the final issue: Whether bloggers are journalists. He ducks an answer, saying it's a continuum and noting, "Most bloggers work in the niches where journalists are sparse."

Fejes concludes: "Treating science bloggers the way Cold Spring Harbor treats journalists doesn't make sense." He gives some reasons why, but I'm not sure I buy it: Maybe an appropriate response is that Cold Spring Harbor shouldn't be so restrictive with journalists.

Or maybe that's not the issue at all. Maybe it's a question of norms within a field and whether those norms are explicit or implicit. If you're ready to read 9,000 words on a narrow piece of the topic, read "All the Conference Stuff That's Not Fit to Print," posted June 17, 2009 at *On Becoming a Domestic and Laboratory Goddess...* by "Isis the Scientist." To Dr. Isis,

> A scientific conference for me is a safe place where I get to interact with professional colleagues I have not necessarily seen in a long time. I get to bring them novel data, discuss the implications, and probe them for ideas on how I might progress and how we might collaborate. I don't attend scientific conferences to report my findings to the public. I attend to report my data to my peers and network.

So, she says, if you're at such a conference and want to tweet or post about something somebody says, *you should ask them personally beforehand*. As far as Dr. Isis is concerned, scientific conferences are, by default, "closed" even if that's not explicitly stated. The post isn't all that long—but the comments are, and it becomes clear that some other scientists don't share the notion that conferences are automatically "safe places" where you can present data with sample sizes of one or two and discuss it, without fear of stuff turning up elsewhere. *Some* conferences, explicitly labeled as confidential, may have that status. Others do not. One commenter noted that geosciences conferences would typically be assumed to be open for comment—but possibly biomed conferences (or some of them) are different.

Another comment uses one of those tricky terms: "semi-private communications." To some of us, "semi-private" is like "a little pregnant" or "somewhat dead." Have you been to conferences where, although the program (or interest group discussion) is open to any attendee and there's no sign or announcement of confidentiality, you can reasonably assume nobody will post, tweet or otherwise discuss publicly what happened in the room? Would you consider that *the norm*? Clearly not in librarianship, and it's hard to believe it's generally true in the sciences (but I'm speaking from a position of profound ignorance).

In practice, the issue may not be "is blogging journalism?" but "when can you assume confidentiality?" Daniel Macarthur, the blogger-scientist in question, *clearly* agrees that confidentiality is appropriate when asserted and wouldn't violate it, but doesn't assume it's automatic. Dr. Isis appears to assume "confidential unless explicitly labeled otherwise." That's a big gulf. Macarthur wrote "Dr Isis discusses conference blogging" the next day (June 18, 2009) at *Genetic Future*, his ScienceBlog blog. He thinks Dr. Isis misrepresented his stance—but he's also changed his policy to assume confidentiality as a default, rather than assuming openness as a default:

> If no official conference policy exists, I will seek advance permission from speakers where possible (and if the conference is small and feels private, in every case), and if this isn't possible I will restrict my coverage to (1) material already available in press releases or online abstract books; and (2) broad conclusions (as opposed to specific details) that will be of interest to my readers but highly unlikely to be seen by anyone as violating the presenter's sacred data.

Norms do matter. One cogent comment exposed one issue that may or may not be in play: You can't

have it both ways. If a conference issues press releases and posts abstracts of presentations on public websites, there's no legitimate basis for saying that people can't tweet or post about sessions that aren't explicitly labeled as closed in an otherwise-open conference. Otherwise, you're saying that only coverage *that the organizers like* is legitimate—and that's unacceptable.

The last word on this matter—for this essay, at least—came in a *Nature* editorial on July 9, 2009, "How to stop blogging." The gist is in the tease: "Organizers have only two options for their meetings: open or closed." That's simplistic—you can have explicitly closed sessions within an open conference (ask any member of an ALA awards committee)—but it's probably right in general. The editorial goes on to say that halfway solutions (e.g., Cold Harbor's "ask permission first" or a "put a logo on your off-limits presentation") aren't sustainable. That might be true…which leaves *invitational* meetings, known to be off the record for all concerned, as possibly the only cases where you can assume nobody will be tweeting or posting about your comments.

Semi-Related Considerations

I caught odd glimpses of a discussion among scientists and bloggers in June 2009. The direct incident had to do with sauropod vertebrae or, if you prefer, dinosaur necks. Three scientists published a paper on the topic in an open access journal—and blogged extensively about it, including "unofficial supplementary information online." You'll find a core list of the paper and posts at "Taylor, Wedel and Naish (2009) on neck posture," posted at *Sauropod Vertebra Picture of the Week*, svpow.wordpress.com/papers-by-sv-powsketeers/taylor-et-al-2009-on-neck-posture/. As a partial aside, I should note that "Choosing a journal…" partway down the list of posts offers some really interesting notes on the process of selecting a journal, including a solid case for open access.

Digression aside, some folks were unhappy about the extent to which blogging had increased the scope of the report beyond the actual published paper. One response says "none of this blog stuff really counts in the peer-reviewed world of 'real' publications." Comments take this further, seemingly objecting to any serious critiques of science within blogs: "Can these critiques be considered by other scientists during their own work? Can they be cited? No. This blog is not peer-reviewed, it cannot be cited in a conventional journal or book article, it has no guaranteed archive that I am aware of, and it can be modified by the authors at any point…"

A blog post can't be cited? Certainly not on the basis of it being a peer-reviewed article, but is that the only way something can be cited? In the broader world, that's nonsense. (I do it all the time.) If the argument is that *no discussion of scientific issues* that is not itself peer-reviewed can be considered a contribution to the discussion, something is deeply, dangerously wrong. Another comment points out that "written communications" have long been citable; if they can be cited, why can't blog posts?

I'm with Nathan Myers (a "total outsider"):

> If there is no way to cite a blog posting in a published paper, surely that indicates something wrong with the process of publication. The present system of publication wasn't handed down from a mountaintop, it was invented, and has since evolved under particular conditions. In many ways it is suited to the needs of naturalists, and in many other ways it is barely tolerable, but constrained by external circumstances. Students who grew up tolerating those infelicities are used to them, but that is no argument for keeping them. Now those external circumstances have all but passed away, and there can be no acceptable reason for the process not to adapt…

"Coturnix," then at *A Blog Around the Clock* on ScienceBlogs, asked, "Why or why not cite blog posts in scientific papers?" on June 11, 2009. He's *had* blog posts cited in scientific papers and discusses the issue. He denies that blog posts lack peer review: They're *post*-reviewed, as readers will point out errors in comments. He also notes that scholarly articles regularly cite other non-peer-reviewed sources such as "book chapters, books, popular magazine articles and even newspaper articles" in addition to "the ubiquitous 'personal communication.'" (Read the comments on this post; you'll get some insights into the extent of elitism among some, certainly not all, scientists—elitism that might or might not be justified.)

The folks at *SVPoW* found this whole thing interesting. Consider this from "Blogs, papers, etc.: some more random thoughts, from Mike this time" (June 13, 2009):

> We all know that blog entries are Not Sufficiently Published to be citable, at least in most journals; but are they Too Published to let you re-use the same material? When you submit to most journals, they ask you to formally state "this material has not previously been published"—is that true if we've blogged it? I am guessing different editors would answer that differently.

This is a different case but equally troublesome: Does blogging about something make it unpublishable? The writer has been "reasonably careful" not to blog anything that might become a paper—but did post about something that became "half a manuscript page (of a total of 75 pages)". To him, it's "unofficial online supplementary information." But there's more. While blog posts might not (or might) be citable, "It seems pretty clear that these forms of 'grey publication' do count in establishing people's reputations among their peers." That's *certainly* true, if unevenly, in librarianship. But:

> Conversely, it's clear that blogs, however rigorous and scientific, count for squat when it comes to committees... [Gives an example of important blogging]...when his tenure committee comes to count up the impact factors of the journals he's published in, those articles will count for nothing. One day that might change, but not while impact factors still exert their baleful influence.

There's a *lot* more to the post—and you might also want to read "Yet more uninformed noodling on the future of scientific publishing and that kind of thing," posted June 16, 2009. (Among other things, it ponders the use of Google Page Rank, or something like it, as a crude measure of document reputation—and I admit to using GPR in my blogging studies *not* as a measure of reputation or quality but as a crude measure of apparent popularity and influence.)

Where did that ad come from?

Bobbi Newman writes *Libraries and Transliteracy* and, as with many libloggers, runs it as a wordpress.com freebie rather than paying to host her own domain. Which led to a June 10, 2010 post, "Apology for Unwanted Google Ads on this Blog."

She viewed the blog without being signed in to wordpress.com and noticed a discreet little Google ad near the bottom of the page. It surprised her:

> I have had multiple blogs with wordpress.com over the years and never seen a Google ad on any of my sites. I did some investigating and discovered that those ads are placed there by wordpress.com. You can pay 29.95 a year to have them turned off.

She's not happy.

> To say I am unhappy is an understatement. I love wordpress.com for blogs, is it the one I recommend to anyone looking to start a blog or web presence. I'm not so much unhappy about the ads but the fact that I have been blogging with wordpress.com for FIVE years and had no idea this was happening. I am angry that I was not better informed, that bloggers have NO control over the ads on their site, that the bloggers that write for LaT do so on their own time and dime because they believe in it. I choose wordpress.com because I thought it was the "best" free option for bloggers, but it is not really free. Would I have chosen it anyway knowing about the ads? Maybe. I don't know.

She apologizes for the ads. I agree that wordpress.com should have been more explicit about its terms. On the other hand...

I pay a (small) three-figure sum to have *Cites & Insights*, *Walt at Random* and my probably-pointless personal pages (waltcrawford.name) hosted by LISHost, and a two-figure sum to retain the domains for those sites (except *Walt at Random*, which uses a LISHost subdomain name). I guess that, if I chose to use a free blogging service, I would assume *something*'s paying the server bills and bandwidth—and ads do seem like a logical possibility. I know that, if I sign up for adwords or adsense on any of my sites, I have little or no control over what ads will appear—and I assume David Lee King (to give one example where ads appear even in RSS feeds for blog posts) doesn't actually select the ads that run. (At least I hope that's the case, given some of the ads.) "Free" is one of those tricky things: Somebody, somewhere has to foot the bills.

Offtopic Perspective

Legends of Horror, Part 1

This may be an odd voyage because I'm not much of a horror-movie fan and don't watch movies with contemporary gore or torture approaches. I would not have purchased this set. Mill Creek sent it to me for free—and my loyal readers voted that I should watch it before some other (purchased) sets. Since the 50 movies include all 20 from the already-viewed Alfred Hitchcock set (most of them not horror movies by any plausible defini-

tion), that means watching no more than 30 others, so we'll see how it goes.

After watching some of these, considering the Hitchcock inclusions and thinking about the sheer quality of some, I understand the package title. It's not that the *films* are legends of horror—it's that somebody involved in each film is, by some standards, a "legend" of horror. So, for example, Hitchcock comedies are eligible. Most of this appears to be packs of films involving some "legendary" actor—so we get five flicks with Bela Lugosi, three with Christopher Lee, six with Tod Slaughter, four with Lon Chaney Jr., three with Barbara Steele, and two each with John Carradine, Cameron Mitchell and Paul Naschy, along with some singletons.

Disc 1

Jamaica Inn. Previously reviewed. $1.50

The Demon, 1979, color. Percival Rubens (dir.), Jennifer Holmes, Cameron Mitchell, Craig Gardner, Zoli Marki. 1:34.

> The sleeve description is almost entirely wrong. The deranged killer doesn't kill a family and abduct the daughter: He does such a sloppy job of killing the mother that the father is able to free her unharmed. The town may be terrified, but we see nothing of town attitudes. The psychic (a former Marine) is the *parents'* only hope; the town isn't involved. This is, I guess, set in South Africa—it was filmed there.
>
> Maybe the blurb-writer got confused because this flick is an incoherent mess. There are two slightly-overlapping plots, both featuring "the demon"—a brutally strong guy who never talks, wears a face mask and gloves with claws when on the prowl, and who seems to favor killing people by suffocating them with plastic bags (except that, in his first attempt, he doesn't bother to tighten the rope at the base of the bag around the mother's neck) and carrying off young women, who wind up dead. The first plot features a guy (Cameron Mitchell) with the "gift of ESP," who chews the scenery fiercely, hands out random clues and mostly gets the father killed—and himself, when he comes back to apologize to the mother and she shoots him on the spot. That does include the one good bit of dialogue in the entire movie.
>
> The second plot involves two young women, sisters or cousins, who both work in a preschool and seem to spend a lot of time nude from the waist up (and, for one of them, entirely nude—for reasons that might have moved the plot forward but not in any way I could discern). The "demon" is stalking one of them and winds up killing the other one and her newfound lover...and gets killed in a climax that's even stupider than the rest of the flick. (I'd describe it, but you'd think the film was a comedy, which it isn't.)
>
> What did I conclude? South African front doors have great locks but no peepholes and the inhabitants gladly open the door for any knocks. Oh, and once the doors are locked, they can't be opened from the inside. Apparently a bunch of shots of a shore with waves breaking over rocks is supposed to mean something, but I could never figure out what. Apparently young South African women of the era (they're white and one is apparently a visiting American) do their hair and makeup while half-dressed (and, if attempting to climb out the roof through those readily-removable tiles to escape, drop their robes as a matter of course—I dunno, maybe being mostly nude saves weight?). Otherwise...well, the print and digitization are lousy, with soft focus and night scenes that turn into vast arrays of gray. I'm being *very* generous in giving this one $0.50.

Murder in the Red Barn (orig. *Maria Marten, or The Murder in the Red Barn*), 1935, b&w. Milton Rosmer (dir.), Tod Salughter, Sophie Stewart, D.J. Williams, Eric Portman, Clare Greet. 1:10 [0:58]

> After the lead characters are introduced as part of a stage play, we get a melodrama of sorts. Handsome Gypsy Carlos is in love with farmer's daughter Maria—but she plays up to the wealthy Squire Corder. When she sneaks out of the house to see him, he Has His Way With Her, leading—well, where does this always lead? Meanwhile, Corder has gambled away large sums that he does not have, but knows of a way to get through marriage to a spinster.
>
> When Maria's father discovers her condition, he does what you'd expect in a melodrama (never darken my door again!), she goes to Corder for help...and we get the title of the flick. Although Corder does his best to frame Carlos, things unravel.
>
> Overacted, to be sure (Tod Slaughter as Corder chews the scenery with gusto), and primitive—but not bad in its own way. Based on a true story, supposedly. Still, as presented here, it's barely a B picture. I'll give it $0.75.

The Ape Man, 1943, b&w. William Beaudine (dir.), Bela Lugosi, Louise Currie, Wallace Ford, Henry Hall, Minerva Urecal. 1:04.

> Bela Lugosi stars as Dr. Brewster, reported missing but actually turned into a half-gorilla through his own experiments. He concludes that the only way to reverse the process is with human spinal fluid, which can only be obtained by killing people. Oh,

and he has an ape or gorilla sidekick who's helping him kill people when Brewster isn't beating up on the animal. That's the horror part of it. Otherwise, it's an odd combination of bad comedy (there's a strange little guy that keeps pushing people toward the story—and I won't give away one sad little surprise in this movie by saying what his deal is), reporter byplay and—well, it's just not a very good picture. Badly acted, done on the cheap, just plain poor.

Add to that a frequently distorted soundtrack making dialogue difficult to understand and just enough missing frames to be annoying, and it's hard to give this more than $0.75.

Disc 2

The Ghost (orig. *Lo spetto*), 1963, color. Riccardo Freda (dir.), Barbara Steele, Peter Baldwin, Elio Jotta (as Leonard G. Elliott). 1:37 [1:35].

Set in Scotland in 1910, where a doctor who's now paralyzed is having odd séances and, with the help of a younger doctor, experimenting with using poisons and antidotes to try to cure the paralysis. The younger doctor is carrying on with the paralyzed doctor's younger wife—who eventually convinces him to kill the older doctor by failing to provide the antidote. Meantime, there's a housekeeper who's sneaking around (and channeling dead people from time to time).

Various forms of haunting start almost immediately. There's more, because the key to the safe has gone missing—but the housekeeper says it might be in the coat the old doctor was buried in. It is, but the safe's empty. Or is it? The young doctor was opening the safe just as the faithless widow was called away... Anyway, there's lots more plot, leading to an ending that not only involves some twists but also winds up with all the key characters either dead or paralyzed.

It's an unpleasant film and may be typical of why I don't much care for horror (although there's only one really bloody scene). I guess there's some psychological tension but I mostly found the acting either overdone (Barbara Steele) or uninteresting (most everybody else). The print's a bit choppy at the beginning. If you love horror flicks you might like this better. I'll give it $1.00.

Crimes at the Dark House, 1940, b&w. George King (dir.), Tod Slaughter, Sylvia Marriott, Hilary Eaves, Geoffrey Wardwell, Hay Petrie. 1:09.

The horror! The horror! Looking at the box for this 50-movie set, I see *four more movies* starring Tod Slaughter—six in all. I'd think my TV itself might show toothmarks given the amount of scenery-chewing going on. This time, Slaughter is an unnamed villain who, in the Australian gold fields of 1850, slays a gold prospector in his tent (in a particularly nasty way), takes his gold, discovers a letter indicating that the prospector is now a peer thanks to his father's death—and, of course, assumes the man's identity.

Murder follows murder as this nasty large man finds that the estate is mortgaged to the hilt, that he got someone pregnant (and married her) before going to Australia, that he's now gotten *another* someone (a maid) pregnant—and that his only chance for financial redemption involves marrying a woman who clearly does not love him. An evil doctor who runs an insane asylum is also involved. What more to say of the plot? All overacted (including a spectacularly absurd uncle of the young woman), all melodramatic, all very silly. One IMDB review calls this "probably the best Tod Slaughter movie," which really *is* a horrifying thought. Charitably, $0.75.

*The Long Hair of Death (*orig. *I lunghi capelli della morte*), 1964, b&w. Antonio Marheriti (dir.), Barbara Steele, George Ardisson, Halina Zalewska, Umberto Raho (as "Robert Rains"), Laura Nucci (as "Laureen Nuyen"). 1:40 [1:34]

When I started these mini-reviews of old movies, I did the reviews for all the movies on a disc after finishing them all. It's fortunate that I don't do it that way anymore—if only because some movies, such as *Crimes at the Dark House*, leave so little impression that I'd have nothing to say other than "not a very good movie." This one's not like that and it's also not like the earlier Barbara Steele movie, other than being dubbed and a Spaghetti Horror. This one *is* a horror film, and a pretty good one—and, fortunately, the type that gentle souls like me can watch without flinching. (No gore, lots of suspense.)

It's set in the time of the plague—the first few scenes in 1482, the remainder in 1499, with the plague breaking in a town toward the end of the film. A woman's being "tried" as a witch (accused of killing a nobleman), where the trial consists of pushing her into a loose structure of hay and setting fire to the structure.

Ah, but her oldest daughter (Steele) goes to Count Humboldt (Raffaelli) insisting that she's innocent—the daughter knows who the real murderer is but needs time to gather evidence. The lecherous old Count says he needs to "discuss" this with her and they won't conclude the trial without him. As he's Having His Way With Her, the trial goes on and her mother is burned alive—hurling an imprecation at the Count and his sons as she dies. The daughter's upset about the Count's betrayal,

so he pushes her off a cliff into a waterfall to shut her up. End of problem. And end of the 1481 segment. Oh, the non-witch's younger daughter Elizabeth (Zalewska) becomes a ward of the court, brought up in the castle (which actually seems ruled by the priest Von Klage).

We get to 1499. Elizabeth's all grown up and has attracted the fancy of the Count's slimy handsome son Kurt (Ardisson)—who, as we learn a bit later, is the actual murderer, killing for political reasons. He takes Elizabeth against her will and marries her. In a storm, the dead older daughter is regenerated and shows up as a beautiful stranger, Mary. About that time, the Count dies.

One thing leads to another. The murderous handsome rapist, oh, sorry, new Count wants Mary and always gets what he wants. She half-assents, half-objects to his plan to murder Elizabeth and helps him (apparently) carry out a bizarre poisoning, burial in a crypt, removal from the crypt and return to her bed—presumably suffocated. One thing leads to another in a fast and furious final half hour, with the end result being...that would be a spoiler, but it's *very* satisfactory all around.

I've talked about the plot too much, and I suppose there are spoilers there—but what it comes down to is a well-plotted, ghost-based story of revenge that works very well. The atmospherics are sound, the setting properly medieval, the acting appropriate for what it is, Steele (in two parts) very good here, and the film slow-moving but in a good way. The only real flaws are some mediocre digitization and background noise on parts of the soundtrack. It's not great, but it's not bad: $1.25.

The Incredible Petrified World, 1957, b&w. Jerry Warren (dir.), John Carradine, Robert Clarke, Phyllis Coates, Allen Windsor, Sheila Noonan, George Skaff, Maurice Bernard. 1:10 [1:06]

I reviewed this as part of the 50 Sci-Fi Classics set in late 2005. Fast-forwarding through the whole thing, this appears to be the same print quality, although it's a few minutes longer—and it's a stretch to call it a horror film. Here's what I said in the earlier review:

> I suppose the diving bell (how could man ever hope to penetrate the depths of the ocean?) might count as scifi. Diving bell on its first deep-sea dive breaks loose, four inhabitants presumed crushed at the bottom of the sea (or something), but they see light, and swim up to...caverns, which have plenty of food and fresh water and air. Eventually, they meet a crazy old man who's been trapped there—under a volcano—for 14 years. After spending most of the movie walking up and down sections of Colossal Caverns in Tucson, where this was filmed, they manage to get rescued by a rival diving bell. Losing [a few] minutes probably helps, but the flick is still awfully slow moving. The mediocre print does the film justice. $1 as a curiosity.

Disc 3

End of the World, 1977, color. John Hayes (dir.), Christopher Lee, Sue Lyon, Kirk Scott, Dean Jagger, Lew Ayres, Macdonald Carey. 1:28 [1:26]

More low-budget scifi (not science fiction) than horror, but I suppose Christopher Lee in a dual role gets it into this category. The story, such as it is: A professor (Scott) studying mysterious transmissions from outer space (and occasionally in contact with a government man working along the same lines) also finds mysterious transmissions *to* outer space—and suddenly begins decoding the outer-space transmissions, which appear to be notes of natural disasters, repeated three times. **Accurate** notes of disasters shortly before they happen...

Ah, but his boss doesn't want him wasting time on this nonsense, he wants him on a lecture tour extolling the thrills of space science, so more people will earn appropriate degrees—and his beautiful wife likes that idea as well. There's some odd sex play in the movie (he postpones going to an award banquet to Get Down, and his wife (Lyon) says something about "why didn't this happen ten years ago?"), although no actual sex or nudity.

Anyway...he goes off with his wife, on their own, to check out the two locations where transmissions to outer space occurred. One is a seemingly harmless convent visited in broad daylight; the other, 40 miles away, is a fenced facility...and somehow it's now the middle of the night. This allows for them creeping around mostly in the dark, the two getting separated, and the wife doing some choice screaming when she thinks she's trapped. Oh, and a mild surprise as to where they actually are...

We wind up with the two back at the convent, which Is Not What It Seems, and a slow-moving plot (*very* slow-moving plot) involving stranded aliens (whose motivation keeps changing and who combine total peacefulness with remarkable viciousness), the odd coincidence that this professor is probably the only person who can bring the aliens just what they need, some remarkably stupid scifi gobbledygook about what they're doing (a time-velocity transfer, or something like that)...and an ending that I won't give away, because it's really not what you'd expect from a low-budget (but good cast) affair like this. Too bad Scott doesn't seem to have any acting chops at all and Christopher Lee is phoning it in; some life in the acting might bring this up from $1.00.

The Fury of the Wolf Man (orig. *La furia del Hombre Lobo*), 1972, color. Jose Maria Zabalsa (dir.), Paul Naschy (who wrote it), Perla Cristal, Veronica Lujan, Miguel de la Riva, Jose Marco. 1:30 [1:23]

Ignore the sleeve description, which is a pretty standard "man gets bitten by werewolf, becomes werewolf, attempts to save himself" plot. This flick is a *little* different—a professor returns from a Tibetan expedition, in which everybody else died and he was attacked by a Yeti, leaving a scar on his chest. If the scar turns into a perfect pentagon, he's to open a box to find a remedy—and the scar does indeed turn into a pentagon while he's in bed with his wife.

As things progress, we have a woman doctor who spouts all sorts of nonsense about mind control from electrical waves and "chemotrodes" and her assistant, the beautiful and innocent girlfriend of an ace reporter. We have, as you'd expect, the professor turning all hairy at the full moon, presenting an odd mixture of attacking savagely, walking nonchalantly, and jumping about like a rabid gorilla. We have his wife being faithless—and her lover (both of them apparently under the doctor's influence) cutting the professor's brake line. We have bodies dug up from graves and returned from the semi-dead. And oh, so much more, including a whole denizen of experimental subjects who are either in a bacchanal, chained up, or sometimes both. Much of it is incoherent; the rest is mostly confusing.

Very badly dubbed, with frequently very bad dialogue. The acting's mixed—now that I see that the hero (professor) also wrote the screenplay, maybe his mediocrity makes more sense. I assumed this was a German production (there's a German paper in one scene), but apparently it's a Spanish production *set* in Germany. Certainly a horror film, but mediocre at best. Adequate person-to-wolf special effects. Charitably, I'll give it $1.25.

The Ticket of Leave Man, 1937, b&w. George King (dir.), Tod Slaughter, John Warwick, Marjorie Taylor, Frank Cochran, Robert Adair. 1:11.

That first credit, for Tod Slaughter, may tell you most of what you need to know—this is a Melodrama, with substantial quantities of ham provided by the ever-overacting villain himself, leer, evil laugh and all. But there's more: **Hawkshaw The Detective**...and, unfortunately, Melter Moss, a stereotypical money-lending, stolen-property-fencing but, mostly forging Jew, replete with chin-rubbing, big nose and Yiddish sayings, who doesn't mind The Tiger's murders as long as he makes money.

The story? Slaughter is The Tiger, the most villainous murderer and thief in all of London, given to garroting people either for gain or because he dislikes them. He desires a young singer—and manages to frame her fiancée in a forgery charge, sending him off to prison. When he returns, The Tiger has become head of a charity devoted to Ticket of Leave Men—that is, parolees, who of course are shunned by all honest folk. One thing leads to another and...there's an ending. I'd give it $1 as a period piece, but the viciously anti-semitic role of Melter Moss pulls it down to $0.50—it debases an otherwise minor overacted melodrama.

Shadow of Chinatown, 1936, b&w. Robert F. Hill (dir.), Bela Lugosi, Bruce Bennett, Joan Barclay, Luana Walters, Mairuce Liu, Charles King, William Buchanan, Forrest Taylor. 1:11.

This one's strange—and surprising. Chinese-American characters don't generally show up here as simple stereotypes and the villains are Eurasian, most specifically the mad scientist who wants to wipe out Europeans and Asians and start his own new race. He also seems to have one of those magic television systems that can see anything anywhere, although in this case he needs to have hidden an oddly named device in each room he wants to view (which, of course, is most everywhere). The mad scientist can also hypnotize almost anybody just by looking at them. Three guesses as to who plays the mad scientist...

The other primary character is a beautiful Eurasian woman who doubles as an agent for San Francisco Chinatown merchants—and a double agent for other merchants determined to put them out of business. She's involved with the mad scientist until she realizes just how utterly evil he is...

Lots more plot, with a daring young reporter who wants to break out of the society pages and her irritable writer pseudoboyfriend. Oh, and an interesting plot point, late in the picture, when he informs her that he's had her fired from the paper because, after all, his wife shouldn't have a job. Really? In 1936? I also question the notion that you'd use a cruise ship to get from San Francisco to Los Angeles in 1936, but it does allow for some of that great shipboard action.

Hard to judge this one. The print's a little choppy at times, the plot makes about as much sense as you'd expect, there's a little more stereotyping than seems necessary and Lugosi's henchfolks are ludicrous. Looking at IMDB, I see what's actually happening: This was a serial, originally running 5 hours total (15 chapters, 20 minutes each), boiled down to a 71-minute flick. Serials rarely make

sense when viewed all at once. For Lugosi fans, maybe $0.75.

Disc 4

This disc (and three-quarters of disc 5) consists of Alfred Hitchcock films, all reviewed in *C&I* 9:10 (September 2009). I did not revisit them.

Sabotage. $1.50.

The Ring. $1.00.

Blackmail. $1.25.

Young and Innocent. $1.00

Disc 5

The Man Who Knew Too Much. $1.75.

The Lodger. $0.75.

The Farmer's Wife. $1.50.

Legacy of Blood (orig. *Blood Legacy*), 1971, color. Carl Monson (dir.), Rodolfo Acosta, Merry Anders, Norman Bartold, Ivy Bethune, John Carradine, Richard Davalos, Faith Domergue. 1:30 [1:22]

The setup is familiar: Hated wealthy father dies, children and servants gather to hear the will...and find that they must all live in the mansion for one week in order to inherit anything. If any of the children die, the others will split the remainder—and if they *all* die, the servants (otherwise rewarded a peculiar annuity) get it all.

They're quite a collection. One servant, Igor, is nutty as a loon and a masochist to boot (or whip); the cook is a sober woman who served as a substitute mother; the third, a handsome chauffeur, has a lamp made from a Nazi who stuck him with a bayonet and a large collection of Nazi memorabilia. As for the children...well, there's a strong hint of incest in one case, leaving one attractive (and married) woman who's a basket case and a young man who's loonier than the butler.

I won't bother with the plot. You can guess how it works out and to the extent you're wrong it doesn't much matter. The few gory scenes are shown multiple times to emphasize the gore. Otherwise, this is a remarkably slow-moving and dull story.

The print varies between mediocre and bad but it's decidedly better than the script, acting and direction. A reasonably strong cast is wasted in this nonsense. Fortunately, this version is missing eight minutes—which means it was only an hour and 22 minutes that I'll never get back. Even fans of John Carradine will be disappointed: His dismal little role only takes a few minutes. I'm being charitable to give this incompetent picture $0.50.

Disc 6

The Werewolf vs. Vampire Woman (orig. *La noche de Walpurgis*), 1971, color. Leon Klimovsky (dir.), Paul Naschy, Gaby Fuchs, Barbara Capell, Andres Resino, Yelena Samarina, Patty Shepard. 1:35 [1:21]

Right off the bat, this film shows a rare level of intelligence among its characters. A medical examiner and friend go into this creepy place, at night, against the wishes of the friend, to do an autopsy on a body that's been shot with two silver bullets because the townspeople believe it to be a werewolf. So the medical examiner, instead of conducting a usual autopsy, immediately digs out the two bullets to demonstrate how ridiculous the whole werewolf notion is, then turns away to have a cigarette...as the now-revived man turns wolf, kills the two, then goes off on a howl.

That's right, it's another cheapo horror flick where people demonstrate that they're too dumb to live...and, with rare exceptions, don't. Two young women working on their dissertation go off to the wilds of northern France looking for the grave of a centuries-old vampire/witch, get lost, wind up at a remote house with no electricity where a handsome "writer" is working on a manuscript. Before you know it, they've combined forces to locate the probable gravesite—at a crossroads, where all good witchgraves are located. The cover says clearly that the grave should not be disturbed until judgment day so...**of course**...they remove the cover. Since this disturbs one of the women, she goes off alone to explore the abandoned church as the other two open the coffin...and, since they know that the only thing keeping the vampire dead is the silver cross piercing her body, the other woman **pulls out the cross**.

The rest of the picture's consistent with this "we know the worst possible thing to do is X, therefore we'd better do X right away!" approach. It features vampires drifting across the ground, dream sequences, a touch of cheesecake and what passes for a happy ending. Badly filmed, poorly directed, badly scripted, generally poorly acted, and the lead does a nice job of ducking out of camera range for transitions from human to werewolf. The full version might be more coherent but seems unlikely to be much better. Charitably, $0.50.

The Phantom Creeps, 1939, b&w. Ford Beebe and Saul A. Goodkind (dir.), Bela Lugosi, Robert Kent, Dorothy Arnold, Edwin Stanley, Regis Toomey, Jack C. Smith. 1:18.

This review, written before looking anything up on IMDB, is valid *only* if this flick—certainly not a horror flick—is an edited-down version of a serial. In that case, the absurd jumps in logic and knowledge and general frenetic atmosphere make sense. Otherwise...well, let's not go there.

Lugosi is Dr. Zorka, a mad scientist who has discovered an element (from a meteorite) with apparently unlimited and wildly varied powers, and intends to Rule The World with it, with the help of his henchman (who he rescued from prison and clearly regards as a tool). Let's see: He has a very strange tall robot with the world's worst face and the ability to very slowly claw somebody into brief submission; he has a device that can do painless surgery; he has a semi-invisibility device (it turns him into a big shadow), he has a combination of little discs and spiders that can set off little explosions that turn people or plants "dead" but not really, he has a two-part combo of invisible gas and Z-ray gun that kills people, er, knocks them out, er... but can also destroy the lock on a safe. And there's a neometer, which cops and spies both *immediately* know is a device to track the location of the secret element they've never heard of. It's that kind of movie.

Essentially, Zorka has a big box of Unobtainium, and he's out to either rule the world or destroy it! All else in this helter-skelter plot flows from that, with a climax in which he's cackling like a proper Mad Scientist and tossing capsules out of a plane that destroy a Zeppelin (!), explode a warehouse or two and send a couple of ships to their doom.

Lugosi's acting seems well suited to this kind of live-action cartoon. There's nothing coherent or sophisticated here, but it's good cheap fun. AndIMDB confirms that this was a serial, originally running 4:25 in 12 episodes. I suspect it would be a lot more fun spread out over three months. On that basis, maybe, $1.25.

A Scream in the Night, 1935, b&w. Fred C. Newmeyer (dir.), Lon Chaney Jr., Sheila Terry, Zarah Tazil, Philip Ahn, John Ince, Manuel Lopez. 0:58.

This is a mystery of sorts with Lon Chaney Jr. as a master of disguise. In this case, he plays two roles: The hunched-over, one-eyed, swarthy, not too bright owner of a grog shop in a lesser area of an Asian port town and a police detective—who disguises himself as the bar owner. It's all in service of catching an international thief who grabs victims with nooses—and who's now stolen the Tear of Buddha, a very special ruby, and kidnapped the girl who was trying to put the ruby in the bank.

Unfortunately, the movie is an incoherent mess, possibly because of missing pieces, possibly because it's really badly made. The rest of the police act in slow motion, resulting in a long action seen that shouldn't have happened (and has armed villains who never use their weapons); the soundtrack's a mess, and the movie's sometimes barely visible. The plot can barely sustain a 15-minute featurette; at 58 minutes, the movie's too long. The title seems random. At best, I'd give this $0.50.

The Crimes of Stephen Hawke, 1936, b&w. George King (dir.), Tod Slaughter, Marjorie Taylor, D.J. Williams, Eric Portman. 1:09.

Another Tod Slaughter melodrama, with Slaughter as an over-the-top villain busily chewing the scenery and laughing his evil laugh at the most inappropriate times—but this time with a twist.

To wit, the whole melodrama is cast as a recollection during a radio show—a radio show that begins with a very strange "singing the news" pair and continues with an interview with a "pet butcher" who's provided horsemeat for cats for the last half century. Then the announcer welcomes Tod Slaughter, known for slaying hundreds and being executed hundreds of times in his many melodramas. Then...the show begins. Aat the end, we cut back to the studio...where the announcer's fallen into a deep slumber, leaving Slaughter to walk off by himself.

This "we know this is all tiresome and silly" frame somewhat inoculates the movie from what I might say otherwise—that is, Slaughter's *so* over-the-top that it's hard to deal with the movie. This one's also an unusually good b&w print, and the story is certainly no sillier than usual. I'll give it $1.

Summing Up

If you leave out the eight Hitchcock flicks (one of which rated $1.75, three others $1.50), there's *nothing* on these six discs really worth mentioning—not a single movie scored $1.50 or higher. Three movies eked out $1.25, four $1.00, so the set would score $7.75 for "mediocre or better." I scored another four at $0.75 and five at $0.50, for $5.50 worth of "why bother?" time-wasters.

Masthead

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Comments should be sent to waltcrawford@gmail.com.

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