Cites & Insights:
Crawford at Large

Volume 2, Number 4: March 2002 ISSN 1534-0937 Walt Crawford

Get Outta Town!

Yes, I know, if you're in an academic library it's tough to take a vacation in March—or April or May, for that matter. What better time to *plan* one—and make the arrangements so you'll know it's coming? If you've just taken a winter break or have one coming, that's wonderful. Why not plan your next trip?

I do these dumb reminders once a year or so because I know too many people treat vacations as disposable extras, not vital parts of healthy lives. (OfficeMax's idiot ads proclaiming "My business *is* my life!" as a good thing don't help much.) When you're up to your nose in snow and your ears in committee meetings, budget crises and firewall failures, who has time to think about Costa Rica or the Natchez Trace?

There's a lot to be said for a week at home, but that's not a real vacation. A real vacation means going away, preferably for a week or more, preferably without a computer, and at least once in a while to somewhere you've never been before. Real vacations should ease your soul and delight your senses while enlightening you in some manner.

Where and how? Making those choices is part of the fun—and planning a good vacation has its own pleasures. If you're in a current mental state where flying would take away half the fun, you'll find loads of good vacation spots in driving distance—and, for now at least, there's always Amtrak. You might find a train-based vacation to be special in its own right. There are deluxe Canadian, American, Australian, British and European train excursions in addition to regularly scheduled routes.

You can even cruise without flying. Quite a few cruise lines changed schedules to offer more cruises out of more American ports. Cruise prices have never been lower in real-dollar terms; the lines built new ships a bit too fast even without the recent dip in travel. But that's also true for hotels: you'll find unprecedented bargains this year, particularly if you plan ahead.

I don't believe there's a *Cites & Insights* reader who lives more than two hours from an area worth exploring, whether in the U.S. or elsewhere. Most of us fail to explore our extended back yards; maybe this is a year to be a traveler near home. Is there a "wine country" nearby? (You might be surprised!) State and national parks you never paid attention to? Historic towns—or, for that matter, the big city you've never approached as an outsider?

Inside This Issue

Sad to say, one of America's great neotraditional vacation possibilities is almost gone. The Delta Queen Steamboat Company ran three authentic steam-driven sternwheelers on America's heartland rivers; sister companies ran weeklong cruises on the Columbia River, around the Hawaiian Islands (on the classic old S.S. Independence), and—recently—along American coastlines. We've been on all three of the heartland boats: the historic Delta Queen, the magnificent Mississippi Queen, and the recent, remarkable American Queen (which has my name inscribed on the ship's bell—along with a few thousand other cruisers from the inaugural season). But the parent company is in bankruptcy. The Delta Queen's still operating and they're trying to bring back the Mississippi Queen, but there's no certainty that either one will stick around. The St. Louis to St. Paul cruise (or vice-versa) is a *great* one-week domestic vacation (although not cheap); I hope it will still be feasible. (It's hard to recommend the Delta Queen unless your taste for history overcomes your need for cabin space and such niceties as closets, but the Mississippi Queen is a fine, comfortable, relatively spacious boat.)

Plan a cruise. Plan a train trip. Find out what's interesting within a reasonable drive. You don't have to spend much money (particularly this year). You do need to take a break now and then.

Bibs & Blather

Where Do You Get This Stuff?

All-seeing, all-reading, in touch with the deep vastness of library and computing literature… Maybe you are, but I rely on the kindness of semi-strangers. Don't we all? Yes, I check quite a few sources regularly—some print magazines, some electronic journals and online magazines. My quick scan of article titles and introductory paragraphs probably misses great items, but I read a lot more articles fully than I cite here. But the publications I regularly read probably account for no more than half the material noted here.

I don't exactly *find* the other items—they find me, one way or another. (Word thinks that should be "find one way, another or me." Hmm.) Sometimes, a writer sends me a copy of something particularly interesting. Publishers that want to see their magazines covered might yet decide to send me complimentary subscriptions. Someone may send a note pointing to an interesting item. More frequently, I pick up such notes from one of the lists I subscribe to.

There's a third category: Resources that do the same thing I'm doing, albeit in different ways. I check a dozen or so Weblogs every day (that takes one coffee break), including the obvious choices (mostly mentioned in my October 2001 *American Libraries* article) and a few more obscure ones. I don't cite the source that pointed me to an article, partly because I'm disorganized but mostly because there are usually two or more citations. (Want a list of what I check? Maybe in the pre-Annual issue.)

Many library Weblogs don't include critical comment and analysis on the links they include. That's not what they're for, and it's not what blogging software works best for. I'd like to think that *Cites & Insights* adds value through commentary even when I don't write separate essays.

Which brings me to the primary reason for this particular blather. Another free monthly Internet publication *does* provide critical commentary together with its citations. I don't cite it here because it's entirely a secondary source—but I read *Current Cites* with interest and gratitude. Roy Tennant and his merry band of contributors have been doing *Current Cites* for a *long* time (the January 2002 issue is volume 13, no. 1) and doing it well. More than once, I've gone back to reconsider an article noted in *Current Cites* that I'd dismissed on first examination—and been right to reconsider.

I must think well of *Current Cites:* I copped half of its name for the start of *Cites & Insights*. I don't believe this newsletter/zine is an imitation of *Current Cites*, but I'm sincere in my flattery. If you're not familiar with *Current Cites*, you can find back issues at http://sunsite.Berkeley.edu/CurrentCites/, and if you send email with the message "sub cites yourname" to listserv@library.Berkeley.edu—replacing "yourname" with your name—you'll get it in your mailbox every month. I won't do *that* for you. *Current Cites* reaches many more people than *Cites & Insights* for good reason; if you've been missing it, take a look.

Going Elsewhere

Many of you would also be well served by reading Peter Suber's *Free Online Scholarship (FOS) Newsletter*—a pure-ASCII emailed newsletter. It's distributed via a Topica list (suber-fos). Suber focuses on free online access to scholarship, as you might guess, and provides a fine mix of personal commentary and annotated citations.

If you track a range of library-related Weblogs, you know that I'm fairly "conservative" compared to some of the bloggers—"stodgy" and "technophobic" might also be good words, although I'd argue with at least one of those. If you want to yell at me when I doubt the inevitable ubiquity of ebook appliances or wearable computers, if you're *certain* that Kids These Days really are a whole new kind of human being and that libraries and librarians must rush to transform yourselves before it's too late—well, then, have I got a blog for you!

Jenny Levine calls herself the "Shifted Librarian" and blogs with a vengeance. She's intelligent, articulate, dedicated, and I'm sure Google can get you to her site. I'm seeing *Cites & Insights* on the link lists of a surprising number of blogs (and I treasure the simple "Walt" in a list of "Friends" on one site). I'm not on her link list of shifted librarians, and I'm pretty sure I don't belong there.

It would be easy to say that if Jenny Levine is right I must be wrong and vice-versa. In some particulars, that's true. If you're waiting me to say "and in those cases, I'm right and she's wrong"…well, don't hold your breath. In general? We're probably both partly right and partly wrong—and on some issues, maybe we're both right even though we disagree. There may be more common ground than I sometimes recognize.

Digital Cameras: I Do Believe

Three megapixels is a long way from the six megapixels most experts claim are available in a

good medium-speed 35mm. image. But taken with the right camera used by the right photographer, three megapixels can yield prints of a quality I would have believed impossible. Until early February.

Sharon Vaughn-Lahman is a colleague at RLG—same division, different duties, nearby office. Her husband, Len Vaughn-Lahman, has been a news photographer for 25 years; he works for the San Jose *Mercury-News* and, indirectly, for Knight-Ridder's 29 other papers. Last fall, he got on a plane for Tajikistan, and went from there to Afghanistan to provide images of the war for Knight-Ridder. You may have seen his work on the *Merc-News* Web site or in your local paper, if you're served by Knight-Ridder.

He came back a few weeks ago. This week (early February, as I write this), the Vaughn-Lahmans mounted one of the periodic exhibits in RLG's upstairs "gallery" (centrally-located hallways with good lighting). The exhibit includes some of his best pictures from the assignment, with commentaries on the situations and the pictures.

I talked to Len as he was deciding where each picture should hang, after noting both the first-rate quality of the photographs *as photographs* and their quality as photographic prints. That's when I learned they were taken with a digital camera. Based on the print quality, I assumed it was one of the new five-megapixel cameras. He didn't know; he'd been handed the camera shortly before getting on the plane. He did know it was a Canon EOS-D30.

A little research revealed that the Canon has a 3.25 megapixel image sensor. By today's market standards, it's a *fairly* high-resolution camera, but nowhere near the most resolution you can buy for under $2,000. But it's an SLR camera and priced like one—about $2,800 not including lenses. Canon makes much less expensive higher-resolution consumer digital cameras, but you pay for replaceable lenses, SLR convenience, and professional quality.

Vaughn-Lahman used this camera under miserable conditions, between cold and sandstorms (not to mention other conditions in Afghanistan). The camera held up (as did the Titanium PowerBook he used for photo-editing, even after a local guard sat on it). With today's foldable, durable satellite antennas, he was able to send pictures directly back to Knight-Ridder under absurd conditions. Of course, for newspaper work the pictures didn't require superb resolution—but the mounted prints show what the newsprint obscured.

This isn't all the camera, by any means. Vaughn-Lahman is a *photographer*, not just a picture-taker. He knows what to look for, he understands lighting and composition—he's an artist in his own medium. He loves the digital camera, noting that—while it's easy to "blow out" white highlights so that the shot is ruined—the digital image offers more gradations and detail in dark areas than slide film.

Is film dead? Not by a long shot. But higher resolution may no longer be a good reason to prefer film. Not if these pictures are any indication.

Meaning?

My old flag for essays was "Perspective," and maybe I should have kept that name. Some recent issues of *Cites & Insights* have been heavy on minutiæ and light on perspective. You know one reason for that: "The Crawford Files" in *American Libraries* and "DisContent" in *EContent* get my best stuff, at least when it fits in 700-word or 1200-word chunks (respectively). Another reason is sheer laziness: annotated citations pile up over the month, while it takes concentration to step back and think about something.

I'm introducing one partial solution this month, and hope to restore some level of perspective at least every other month. The partial solution presumes that few of you read *EContent*—I assume that most of you are in library-related fields, not the "content industry." So, while I could legitimately reprint "Crawford Files" columns here three months after they appear, I wouldn't—and I don't need to, since they're available and archived at ALOnline.

Some "DisContent" columns make no sense for the broader community. Some might at least be intriguing. For the latter, I plan to republish them here once in a while, proceeding chronologically—and providing postscripts to update them when that makes sense. You'll see the first one, "Getting the context," elsewhere in this issue. It was, in fact, the first "DisContent" column. It's *still* lazy, but at least it's perspective—and the price is right.

They is Data

When you read the postscript to "Getting the context" you may be jarred by my singular use of "they"—that is, its use in singular form. I know it's "bad English" but I've given up on the alternatives. You'll see "them" too, for the same reason: "he or she" and "her or him" both get drearily repetitive and English lacks a neuter third-person singular pronoun. People have tried—"shim" and "heshe" and "herm" and others. Like the interrobang (remember the interrobang!?), the efforts have been failures.

The other alternative—using "he" whenever you're dealing with an unknown third party—doesn't suit me either. I don't consider myself particularly PC, but I've been surprised more than once recently to realize that, as a down-home, plain-speaking native of Northern California, I'm appalled

by comments some people elsewhere might consider inoffensive. Maybe there is something about living in the first state where *everyone*'s a minority—and where you're likely to see shop signs in Farsi, Spanish, Mandarin, and English in the same strip mall.

Isn't it odd that a language with two million different words (the most recent estimate I've heard, contrasted to the 60,000 "academically approved" words in French), one that doesn't use gender for most nouns, lacks a genderless pronoun for unknown single people? Don't suggest "it"—that's too jarring when used for people. Until something better comes along, I'll have to be "ungrammatical"—they, them, and their I come.

Data? I'm right on that one. When used with reference to more than one datum as in statistical or scientific work, it's plural. When used as a synonym for "facts," it's singular—a mass noun, as singular as other mass nouns in English. I usually avoid the word altogether, particularly when I'm submitting writing to another publication, because "data are" just sounds wrong outside of a scientific/statistical context. It's easy to substitute "facts" for "data." It's harder to get rid of third-person singular pronouns.

Feedback and Following Up

Karl-Erik Tallmo, a Swedish writer, lecturer, and publisher of *The Art Bin* (http://artbin.com) sent this in late January 2002:

> I enjoyed your recent issue of *Cites & Insights*. Maybe you would be interested in my suggestions for a proof-reading and annotation format for e-texts, which I believe is a most urgent problem to solve.
>
> What we need is something similar to proof-reading signs that have worked so well in the hard copy sector, but also a general annotation format that would allow us to scribble down margin notes in MS-Word files, PDF files, web pages—anything!—and all of this would be possible to search through globally in one search operation.
>
> As a matter of fact, I believe that a truly interchangeable non-proprietary e-book text format with a truly interchangeable non-proprietary mark-up standard for comments and proofreading is a necessity for e-books to really take on as an academic tool. Researchers and scholars don't wish for their marginal notes to be marooned on the pages of some seldom used e-book format.
>
> My idea for a solution is, of course, rough and could be done much better by people with a more profound knowledge of the protocols guiding word processing and web communication. But at least I believe I have described the problem rather accurately. My hope is to reach some of those who are now designing the web and text tools of tomorrow.
>
> See http://www.nisus.se/proof/

That address yields "Proofreading symbols for e-texts, or, Wanted: a general annotation format!"

It's five pages long including two illustrations (it might be four A4 pages), nicely formatted, well written—and I'm not sure what to say about it. It's easy enough to annotate Word files, but that's hardly a universal format. I think Tallmo makes interesting points. If this is an area that interests you, I'll offer the same advice as Tallmo's last sentence: "See http://www.nisus.se/proof/"

LLRX.com: Unique, Not Peculiar

When you read my columns in *American Libraries, EContent* and *Online*, you're reading second drafts—but second drafts passed through the hands and minds of expert editors. Unfortunately, I'm the only editor for *Cites & Insights*, and most of this is (charitably) "one-and-a-half draft," rarely going through a full second draft.

The first sentence of the last section of "The year ahead (and behind), II" in *Cites & Insights* 2:3 is an unfortunate result. "LLRX.com operates at an odd intersection of librarianship and the legal profession." Any good editor would have called me and said "Do you mean odd as in peculiar, or odd as in distinctive or unique?" To which I would have responded: "Duh. Unique, and thanks for catching that." (Interestingly, the oldest meaning of "peculiar" is also right for LLRX.com: *distinctive*, but not in a pejorative sense. Language shift happens.)

If you've never visited LLRX.com, take a look. Sabrina Pacifici started it six years ago; currently, it reaches an audience in the high five figures. Here's the quick description from Pacifici's email sig:

> LLRX.com, the free webzine updated daily, with all new issues published twice each month. Including Features, Columns, and related articles focused on electronic legal research, technology and the law, breaking legal-tech news, foreign and international law Web resources, digital legislation issues, and reviews of Web-based databases, applications, products, and services, since 1996. http://www.llrx.com

I check the Weblog portion at least twice a week for well-annotated pointers. The formal issues include a range of contributions serving LLRX's split community—roughly half "law people" and half "library people." The serial may be a Webzine but it's not a

personal zine: it's well edited and comes from a range of writers. I've gathered valuable material from LLRX.com and expect to keep doing so.

And you gotta love a law-related Webzine with an article on online air fares subtitled "The fare is not always law." [If you don't get it, ask any lawyer or watch the right TV shows.]

Text-e Part II

Maybe it perverts the whole idea of text-e (www.text-e.org) to take in the entire English portion of a two-week segment at one sitting. Perhaps fatigue comes naturally from attempting three such portions in one day. It's conceivable that the conferees themselves have been running down as time goes on, but I'm inclined to blame my own limitations. In going through the fifth, sixth, and seventh segments of this marathon e-conference, I admit to finding less that delighted or intrigued me, more that baffled or annoyed. I should not be surprised that much of that annoyance came from Stevan Harnad, who seems to have reverted to type with his "optimal and inevitable" futures, his offhand dismissal of all but purely-digital futures (and of problems with such futures), his constant refrain of PostGutenberg, skywriting, and the rest of the Future According to St. Harnad.

Again I urge those with open minds, an interest in this whole area, and lots of time to visit text-e yourself. What whole area? If that's not clear from these and previous notes (and I don't know that it is), maybe the text-e site will help. There's more to come, although not much.

Theodore Zeldin: The Future of the Internet

Zeldin chose a "conversation" over an essay. Gloria Origgi, one of text-e's moderators, carried on this conversation with Zeldin; Noga Arikha, another moderator, transcribed it. Origgi reveals a "conclusion-first" attitude for text-e that I might have suspected: "The idea is to throw a new light on the transformation of texts by the Internet…" Which certainly renders moot the issue of whether text *has*, in fact, been "transformed" by the Internet. The Rev. Dodgson would be proud.

Zeldin says, "We *all* get a lot of unsolicited e-mails." [Emphasis added.] I'm finding that "we all" is like "inevitable"—usually false and almost always unnecessary. I know people who've used email for more than a decade and who receive almost no "unsolicited" e-mail, if you include signing up for mailing lists as solicitation. I get perhaps two to four pieces of true "unsolicited" e-mail per day; I don't call that "a lot."

That silliness pales next to this claim: "We are now in the process of creating a new kind of human being" and, later, "the new generation does not resemble the past one." Oh really? Perhaps "resemble" is an exceedingly bad translation, but this is (in my opinion) nonsense. And, as far as I can see, the nonsense leads nowhere.

How about this: "The personal Web page is saying: I am not who I appear to be." Really? Then again, "Most people in the world are now seeking not so much money and power as respect." If you change that to "most moderately affluent people in First World nations are as interested in respect as they are in money and power," the point might be debatable—but if "money" translates to "the ability to gain food, shelter, clothing and health care," I will flatly assert that *most people in the world* are desperately seeking the equivalent of money. Then again, most people in the world haven't the slightest interest in creating personal Web pages.

I am no longer surprised when someone informs me that software writers "are creating all sorts of tools for functions we never end up using," where "we" is certainly taken to be universal. Examples of functions that *nobody* has any use for but that analysts found reasonable to specify in software? I have yet to find a function in, say, Microsoft Word that does not have clear uses for real people.

Maybe I just don't get it—it, in this case, being the point of the whole discussion.

Commentaries on Zeldin

It may not be surprising that the somewhat disjointed conversation resulted in commentaries going off in any number of directions. Rob Walker wanted to discuss distance education. Michael Ullyot says flatly: "E-mail will seem, one day, quite rudimentary: it will be replaced by technology that enables a mutual & instantaneous exchange of sound and video." This is, of course, a classic "the new *replaces* the old" error, and fails to recognize that e-mail serves different needs than real-time communication or conferencing of any sort. It's *And, not Or*: one of my own hobbyhorses. Gloria Origgi provides dismal comments on education in Italian public universities, where lectures are always open to the public, teachers have no sense of who their students are, and students are deferential to the point of silence. "My classroom teaching has been very often an experience of 'distance' education!" There's more…

Harnad jumps in with his three-chord medley, or at least part of it: "discourse at the speed of thought," "scholarly skywriting," self-citations up the wazoo… A flamer emerges and then recedes, leading to a side conversation about moderation and censorship.

I leave the discussion no wiser than I entered, but slightly more bewildered.

Jason Epstein: Reading: The Digital Future

Epstein pays attention to the realities: "A significant market for books read on screens has not yet emerged, and in my opinion this may never become the major mode of distribution for books on line." More likely? Print on Demand—albeit, in his view, PoD at much lower prices than current paperbacks.

He sees neighborhood machines "wherever electricity and supplies of paper exist"—in Kinko's, Starbucks, libraries, dormitories. Offset-printed paperbacks "will be at a competitive disadvantage" because the bookstore's markup will make them so much more expensive—although there's some reason to believe that PoD results in much higher unit costs. He sees roles for boutique bookstores, ones specializing in art and children's books (harder to do via PoD), and outlets for hardcover bestsellers.

Epstein recognizes the likelihood of vastly greater numbers of "published" books but thinks we'll be able to determine what's readable; he's an optimist for the era of mass self-publishing. He does not seem to equate bookstores with "nearby sites" that house PoD machines (which, given binding requirements, are likely to remain somewhat expensive)—and, thus, anticipates a much smaller markup from production cost.

Epstein's publishing experience stands behind his comment that authors in today's peculiar publishing environment "are no more loyal to their publishers than their publishers are to them." Why should they be? If loyalty isn't a two-way street, it's a losing proposition.

Recommended, but not as The Only Answer.

Commentaries on Epstein

How *dare* someone claim that print books make sense in The Digital Age? Stevan Harnad jumps all over Epstein for this "failure of imagination" and gives us the Inevitable V-Book, the single booklike construct containing all your desired books. But, of course, true digerati will dispense with those Gutenbergian artifacts altogether, far preferring to have text projected on whatever wall we happen to be gazing toward. (I'm not sure what technology tracks our eye movements to provide this scenario, but those are details in Harnad's PostGutenberg world.)

As Harnad's lengthy discussion continues, it becomes clear that Harnad knows all, and that those who disagree simply don't understand. "*There will be no exceptions*" to his rule that all texts must be linked to all other texts and, thus, fully digital. A preference for physical books is a "fetish." He assures us that nobody has such "ownership fetishes" for videos (or, presumably music?), and that "when they are replaced by downloads, no one will shed a tear." Collect DVDs? Nonsense—nobody would do that, and presumably nobody with downloadable music available would ever collect CDs. At least not in Harnad's optimal and inevitable future.

Harnad may be the Compleat Futurist when it comes to dissemination of text, but he's a Tory when it comes to publishing. He equates *all* self-publishing with vanity publishing and asserts that we will continue to need the "publisher's imprimatur" as a form of a-priori quality control. "This will be a tag promising a certain level of quality, one on which readers can rely and one whose established quality standards authors will still endeavour to earn the mark of having met." Perhaps Harnad's spent too long in the fields of scholarly article publishing. Name the publishers of the last ten books you read (outside the library field, at least). Now tell me which of those publishers you regard as fulfilling Harnad's role, assuring that every book will be worthy. "Oh, look: It's from Simon & Schuster. It *must* be good."

There's more—lots more, as this fortnight involved many threads and comments. Few correspondents were as dismissive of Epstein's future as Harnad (at least those writing in English). One consistently-irritating participant, who shall go unnamed, informs us that he buys his ebooks from Amazon.com "for 1/10th the cost of the Pbook," which suggests that he's reading a lot of public-domain books, since most contemporary ebooks at Amazon are roughly as expensive as print equivalents. But this participant buys into the all-rental future, presuming that you'll be able to read a book-length text "for pennies." *Sure* you will.

Richard Minsky takes Harnad to task for "maligning Jason Epstein," then goes on to say "It is no longer far-fetched to visualize our brains connected directly to the information network." Well…consider the percentage of cyberpunk novels that reveal dystopian futures, and think about your own interest in "jacking in" to a worldwide network (with security by Microsoft?). Not for me, thank you, but maybe for that mysterious Next Generation. Harnad responds, using the occasion to accuse Epstein of a "*fixation* on hard copy." Don't you love reasoned dis-

reasoned discourse? Minsky gets peeved and in the process (but for other reasons) notes the ephemeral nature of the Internet.

This, as it turns out, is another Harnad Hobbyhorse: he seems to despise any suggestion that print books have archival qualities while digital forms, currently, do not. So, you see, RLG, OCLC, CLIR, and the rest of us are simply wasting time and money: there *is no digital preservation problem*, and "the digital media are actually better equipped to store, migrate, upgrade, preserve…our cumulative literary legacy…than any prior medium." Why? Because Harnad has declared it to be so. Would that all problems were solved so simply. And woe to anyone who gainsays the Word of Harnad! "I think it may be hearing the same (easily and frequently) answered points raised anew (innocently) over and over again that, after years, occasionally (but, I agree, not justifiably) puts an impatient edge on one's tone in replying, yet again…"

In one other lengthy discussion, years ago, Harnad briefly had the self-awareness to recognize that saying something over and over again does not automatically make it so. I guess he's learned better since then. If he "answers" a point and others consider his answer flawed, ignorant, or simply not an answer—well, that's *their* problem. Bits good. Objects (and objections) irrelevant. Surely we all know that by now!

Another thread brings in the KTD argument: Kids These Days spend endless hours at the screen and just love it, so why not read from the screen? They're mutants, you know…

In yet another thread, Richard Minsky assures us that we'll soon (well, 20 years) have e-paper with higher resolution than most commercial printing processes, no issues about screen fatigue or health hazards—and, by the way, we'll have "nuclear microbatteries…with half-lives over 150 years." I can hardly wait: the nuclear-powered ebook!

There's more. Lots more.

Bibliothèque publique d'information:
Babel and the Vintage Selection: Libraries in the Digital Age

Make that *one* library, the French Public Information Library, a national library with 350,000 books, 2,320 periodicals, 400,000 documents, 400 workstations, a bunch of other stuff, and 7,000 daily visitors. And…well, it's a 23-page paper (roughly half of that appendices or "annexes"), it discusses some aspects of this particular library, and you'll have to read it yourself. I don't know what to say about it—other than a suggestion that it says very little about "libraries" in general. The handful of commentaries says even less, although the indefatigable Harnad takes the opportunity to reveal his ignorance (or dismissal?) of the real work of librarians.

I draw no conclusions.

The Good Stuff

While it's great to point out Big Important Papers and key articles, sometimes the Good Stuff is just a page or two—and sometimes what makes it good is nothing more than well-crafted levity. I'm unlikely to drop a **Strongly recommended** flag into these wonderful little pieces, but that doesn't mean they're not worth your time—if it's a topic that interests you. I start out with three such brief pieces this time.

Dvorak, John C., "The nine assassins of broadband," *PC Magazine* 21:2 (January 29, 2002), p. 55.

Once in a while, Dvorak puts it all together sensibly. This may be one of those times, as he offers nine reasons the "broadband revolution" is "moribund, overrated, and misunderstood." A few nuggets: "Exactly why do we need to be connected 24/7?" People don't see the value. Service has been problematic—and once you get broadband, you find that most "broadband" media isn't that great. There are others, including the most disturbing one if you're a broadband investor: "**Saturation.** How about this for an idea: Everyone who wants high-speed access already has it." That overstates the downside, but maybe not by much. Otherwise, why would the industry be so busy trying to show Congress why the government should shove broadband down our throats?

Cavanaugh, Tim, "Let slip the blogs of war," *Online Journalism Review*, January 17, 2002. (ojr.usc.edu)

Tim Cavanaugh used to be part of the *Suck* team. It shows. This tribute to one segment of Weblogs points up some…um…oddities of the medium that turn up in other kinds of blogs as well as noting some tendencies of online pundits. "For it is in spending time with the war blogs that one comes to know the chaos, the inhumanity, the ultimate futility of war."

This isn't a tiny essay and, read online, comes with dozens of links—but a four-sentence extract may give a sense of the whole wonderful piece:

> The weblog is not the most useless weapon in the War On Terrorism. That title is still held by the nuclear submarine. But it is precisely their unconventional methods that make the war bloggers enemies to be feared. Like Al-Qaeda, the war bloggers are a loosely structured network, a shadowy underground whose flexibility and compulsive log-rolling make them as cost-effective as they are deadly.

Lasica, J.D., "Niches of trust," *Online Journalism Review*, January 22, 2002. (ojr.usc.edu)

I'm never quite clear as to whether *OJR* is a journalism review that happens to be online or a review of online journalism, and maybe it doesn't matter. Habitual readers know that I disagree with some of Lasica's pet causes, but Lasica excels at locating and featuring the new forms of journalism that probably wouldn't work without the Web.

This essay discusses three sites practicing "varying forms of consumer journalism and community news," all run by current or former print journalists: The Car Place, Theme Park Insider, and Consumer World. Lasica describes the sites and discusses them with their founders; it's good reading about worthwhile projects.

Noorlander, Willem, "Rights and obligations of information users," *Online* 25:6 (November/December 2001), pp. 22-7.

This cover article proposes a "bill of rights" for the information user—one that balances a set of "user rights" against a set of "user obligations." I'm not sure a summary would be useful. I have a few mild reservations, but they're not clear enough to note here. **Recommended** if you're thinking about relationships between information buyers and sellers—not as the answer, but as a worthwhile framework for the questions.

Kimmel, Stacey, and Jenne Heise, "Being there: tools for online synchronous reference," *Online* 25:6 (November/December 2001), pp. 30-9.

Online "live" reference is not the same thing as 24/7 reference and *certainly* not the same thing as referred "virtual" reference service where an offsite firm handles some or all of the reference for your library. You can provide synchronous reference without those other, more controversial, steps; this article offers a discussion of tools to help you do that.

The background is Lehigh University Library's interest in offering online reference. It's a thoughtful, detailed article that includes a cautionary note: "The low volume of use reported by other libraries made it difficult to justify an immediate purchase of high-end, multifeatured but pricier software."

I was amused by a comment in one review: "The server hardware requirements are fairly hefty—a Windows 2000 PC with an 800mHz Pentium II processor and 128 megabytes of RAM is recommended." How times change! Dell's PowerEdge 500SC server meets those specs for $499 and there's scarcely a desktop PC on the market that doesn't exceed them. What's hefty in March 2001 is entry level in February 2002: such is personal computing.

What did Lehigh choose? InstantService, for now. "In terms of the volume of transactions seen to date, we believe it was wise to limit our initial investment in the software for this service." **Recommended**—and see the next citation.

Fagan, Jody Condit, and Michele Calloway, "Creating an instant messaging reference system," *Information Technology and Libraries* 20:4 (December 2001), pp. 202-12.

Southern Illinois University's Morris Library has offered digital reference though e-mail and a Web form for three years, handling 629 questions during fiscal 2001. During the first months of 2001, librarians evaluated available options for synchronous reference (which they call messaging reference)—and decided to roll their own. The article provides background, another set of evaluations for available systems, and comments on their own system. That system is based on open source software and will itself be posted at www.oss4lib.org, although SIU won't provide technical support for other users.

It's another good look at the landscape with different outcomes. One lovely table shows use of real-time reference at selected institutions (based on reports during ALA's 2001 Annual Conference)—and boils those reports down to usage per hour of service. University of Florida, with 35 weekday hours of service, shows a high of 5.3 questions per hour; the Alliance Library System, a 24x7 service involving eight institutions, had less than one use for every four hours of service. It makes sense to read this and the Kimmel/Heise article together. **Recommended**.

Honan, Matthew, "When Automatic's teller ran dry" and "'Plastic is all I do,'" *Online Journalism Review*, January 24 and 29, 2002. (ojr.usc.edu)

I probably wouldn't include this two-part article if I didn't still miss *Suck* (the Web site's there but it rotates through old articles). That operation's demise was tied up with Automatic Media, the merger of *Suck, Feed,* Alt.Culture, and the new Plastic.com—a "live collaboration between the Web's smartest readers and the Web's smartest editors." There were also a slew of affiliated sites: Spin, Inside.com, Nerve, NetSlaves, Modern Humorist and others. I

never found Plastic.com interesting—it was *way* too cynical for my taste—but others did. The site received loads of good press and decent traffic.

What it didn't get was advertising, for itself or other sites. The sites either disappeared or went on hiatus. According to the story, Carl Steadman—one of *Suck*'s two creators—bought Automatic Media for $40,000. Plastic's back as a one-man show. Does it have a future? Your guess is better than mine, particularly if you visit Plastic at all. Interesting reading.

Janes, Joe, "How to think about technology," *Library Journal* February 1, 2002, with sidebar by Joan Frye Williams.

In recent speeches, I've been talking about "finding the ways that work" (with credit to Environmental Defense)— looking for innovative techniques and devices that are likely to survive and serve libraries and users. I've tried to set forth principles for selecting such innovations. I'm not convinced that my guidelines are all they should be—one reason they haven't turned up in *American Libraries*.

Joe Janes, assistant professor at the University of Washington's Information School (is that anything like a library school?), was founding director of the Internet Public Library. This article derives from his keynote at last fall's LITA National Forum. He offers six questions to ask about innovations and proposes that libraries should fund an effort to "be upstream," trying to influence the development of new technologies. Joan Frye Williams (library consultant and long-time friend) offers a set of six "hot technologies with a purpose" as a sidebar.

I'm not going to summarize the questions or the technologies here. You should be able to find the article on *LJ*'s Website (libraryjournal.reviewsnews.com), although it should be easier to read in print form. (Why is their printer-friendly format so gosh-awful ugly?) It's short, well written, and I think I agree with most of his points—although I'm less enthralled by his "upstream" proposal. That may be my problem, not his. I'm going to hang on to this one for a while, look at it as I'm preparing for my next couple of speeches, and see whether I can synthesize something. ("But be sure always to call it, please, research." Tom Lehrer fans will know whereof I speak—but I *will* give Janes credit if I use his stuff.)

Joan's six hot technologies? I have problems with the last one, and she knows what those problems are—I'm still not sure how you do collaborative filtering and user ratings while maintaining absolute reader confidentiality. Otherwise, these make the kind of good sense I'd expect from Joan. Both article and sidebar are **Recommended**.

Murray, Peter E., "Library Web proxy use survey results," *Information Technology and Libraries* 20:4 (December 2001), pp. 172-8.

Why do libraries use proxy servers and what do they use? Peter Murray, a grad student in Simmons' MLS program, tried to find out; this article is the result. It's informative, interesting, and worth reading. **Recommended**.

It's also the winning paper in the first annual LITA/Endeavor Student Writing Award competition. We need more good writers in the library field; *Information Technology and Libraries* needs more articles.

Hint hint: you can reach the editor, Dan Marmion, at dmarmion@nd.edu—and I'm suggesting that you think about *ITAL* if you have an idea for an article that fits within the journal's scope. It's my first choice for the kinds of article that work within its scope and approach, both as writer and reader. You don't get paid and you'll be subject to blind peer review, but reviewers don't care (or know) who you are and are always looking for good material.

Golderman, Gail, "Weaving multimedia into the collection: one library's journey," *Information Technology and Libraries* 20:4 (December 2001), pp. 198-200.

This brief communication tells a fascinating story: how the Schaffer Library at Schenectady's Union College has dealt with "multimedia"—nonprint materials—over the years. It's largely about cataloging and technical processing and a gradual move from exception processing toward integrated handling. Well worth reading: **Recommended.**

Pavlik, John V., "When machines become writers and editors," *Online Journalism Review*, February 5, 2002. (ojr.usc.edu).

How's this for a November 29, 2001 lead sentence: "In a fortress devastated by a bloody three-day uprising, alliance fighters dragged out bodies Wednesday from a courtyard strewn with 50 slain Taliban fighters, some with hands bound with black scarves."

A little long, a bit ungainly—but not bad for a computer. That sentence comes from Columbia Newsblaster, prototype software to summarize news stories—in this case, working with 32 articles from various sources. It's no substitute for good editors and journalists when it comes to analysis and interpretation, but—as with computer translation—it may be a useful tool to help cope with information overload. It may also be a dangerous tool, and I get nervous whenever a writeup claims that artificial intelligence is involved. Then again, this story comes from the executive director of Columbia University's

Center for New Media, heavily involved in the project. Nonetheless, worth a quick look. DARPA funding is involved—which makes some sense.

Kucsma, Jason, "Countering marginalization: incorporating zines into the library," *Library Juice* 5:6 Supplement (February 14, 2002). (www.libr.org/Juice/issues/vol5/LJ_5.6.sup.html)

I noted an interesting 1999 piece by Cheryl Zobyl last October, discussing zines and why public libraries should collect some of them. This much longer (and heavily-footnoted) piece makes similar arguments for a broader range of libraries, along the way politicizing zines in a more fundamental manner than I believe to be warranted. As I read this article, it's hard not to assume that all zines are radical, that SRRT is the natural place to discuss zine-related issues—and that the whole culture of science fiction fanzines, where I'm inclined to believe the term originated, is somehow peripheral to the "progressive" reality of zines.

Kucsma's not my kind of writer (and, I suspect, vice-versa). Yes, some zines represent progressive political thought—but many (most?) deal with aspects of culture outside the political arena. Are those zines somehow misusing the name or beneath consideration? Does it really go without saying that American culture "privileges passive consumption over active participation"?

I could go on—and I could as easily drop this piece into "Cheap shots and commentary." But, centrist as I am and even as I waffle as to what *Cites & Insights* should be called, I agree that libraries—public and academic—would serve their communities and historians well by collecting alternative and gray literature in a manner that assures long-term access. If you can filter out the calls to the barricades, this article is a worthwhile addition to previous articles on the topic by such radicals as Patricia Glass Schuman, Ron Chepesiuk, and Chris Dodge.

DisContent
Getting the Context

Have you been quoted out of context? It's an infuriating aspect of writing, speaking, or sending email—and it's more infuriating when you're quoted correctly. Yes, you wrote that string of words; no, you didn't mean what's implied in the new context in which your words appear.

There's more to context than the paragraphs surrounding a given quotation. In the econtent arena, contextual questions become particularly aggravating for at least three reasons:

- It's easier to cut-and-paste content, eliminating its original context entirely.
- Even when full citations appear (or when "quotation" consists of a link to the original), it's more difficult to evaluate the original context because there are so many little-known Web sites.
- On-screen presentation lacks some of print's best tools for effectively presenting related materials (the expanded context of most print content).

The print and digital worlds overlap. That makes context issues even more complex.

Did I Say That?

A funny thing happened on the way to this column. Midway between writing an outline and starting on the text, I stumbled upon a Web essay arguing that e-books and e-book readers are inherently obsolete because they attempt to replicate print books. The writer argues that digital publications should go beyond print models to find new ways to communicate. I was about to click away from the essay when I came to the closing paragraphs.

In those paragraphs, the writer asserted that I tend toward the same view, citing my "Technology column in *American Libraries*" where I provide "an evaluation of e-books in the September, 2000 issue." That stopped me cold. I did indeed have an article (not a column) in the September 2000 issue that discussed different media that are lumped together under the name "e-books." ("Nine Models, One Name: Untangling the E-Book Muddle," *American Libraries*, September 2000, pp. 56-59.) That article was *not* a call for "extended books" (the last of the nine models); the discussion of that model was one of the briefest in the entire article, possibly because the concept of "extended books" is so vague.

The writer quoted me directly. The quotations were accurate, but my intent was distorted because of contextual problems:

- The Web essay quoted three sentences, but failed to include the next sentence—one that turned a "yes" into a "yes, but."
- *Portions* of sentences were introduced in ways that distorted my meaning, suggesting that I was "looking for" something when I noted its existence.

The writer cited a widely distributed print magazine so that readers could check the context for themselves. That's a best-case scenario for out-of-context content. Even in traditional media, more typical cases are more problematic. A writer or speaker's sentences may be quoted correctly, but without cita-

tion, making it more difficult to investigate the original. Was the strong statement actually an example of something the author was arguing against? The reader may never know. Paraphrased material is even worse, as it couples possibly biased rephrasing with lack of citation.

Context Beyond Completeness

Contextual issues include completeness, but also the following and many others:

- Where and when did the item originally appear? An article touting the effectiveness of St. John's Wort will have different significance if it appears in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* than if it appears in *Neutraceutical Truth* (if there was such a magazine)—and a chapter from *Huckleberry Finn* carries very different meaning if the reader isn't aware of its original publication date.
- What related items originally surrounded this item, either to amplify or contradict it?

Understanding the source—both the author and the publication—represents a fundamental aspect of garnering meaning from content. It's not enough to read the words; you must also have some sense of the underlying stance represented by the publisher, publication, author, and times in which the original appeared.

On the Web, hyperlinks make it easier to track down the full story from which content has been taken—if hyperlinks are provided. But the Web can obscure context in other ways. It can be difficult to use sidebars and cluster related articles effectively; even if a parent page groups a set of links, each linked article will be read in isolation. There's little point in discussing cut-and-paste Web quotations that omit proper citations: thoughtful readers know that such free-floating "content" should be ignored.

Unfortunately, proper citation doesn't help as much in the online world, if only because there are so many more sources. You probably regard content from the *New York Times* differently than content from the *Washington Times*—but how do you evaluate an article from worldnetdaily.com? If you're aware of both print magazines, you treat content from *The Industry Standard* differently than content from *The Weekly Standard*—but if you see content from "thestandard.com," which mental filter do you use? It's not always obvious from the content itself. While *The Industry Standard* calls itself "The Newsmagazine of the Internet Economy" and *The Weekly Standard* is a profoundly conservative political magazine, *The Industry Standard* includes content that can appear to be political. In this case, thestandard.com comes from *The Industry Standard*—but you might not know that when reading redirected content.

Bizarre instances of the difficulty of identifying Web sources have come about through links to stories from "America's finest news source," *The Onion*. Other Web sites summarize shocking material from *The Onion* and typically include a link to a specific story—which, when viewed in its entirety, reads as a straight (if extreme) news story. You must go to the home page and apply some common sense to recognize that *The Onion* is satire, a deadpan and frequently viciously extreme takeoff on American newspapers and culture. If you don't have that context, the individual stories can be quite disturbing.

Summing Up

Context matters—so much so that it's tempting to say that there is no meaningful content without context. A news story from *The Onion* carries no factual information. You can't fully interpret an article on global warming without some understanding of the author's credentials, the publication's reputation, the sources cited, or a combination of all three.

It's easy to distort content by changing the context. In the Web environment, it's far too easy to provide content that can't be understood fully, because the context is lacking or distorted. In many cases this is inadvertent or innocent, but it's still problematic.

This "DisContent" column originally appeared in *EContent* 24:1 (February/March 2001), pp. 56-7.

Postscript and Bringing It Home

You're tired of hearing me lament the passing of *The Industry Standard*. For better or worse, the *Weekly Standard* is still with us, with its editor earning huge honoraria from Enron and a recent column griping about the growing liberalism of *Reader's Digest*.

The column above—which appeared without a trailing introductory paragraph to provide a little context for "DisContent" itself—spoke to the problems inherent in syndicated online "content."

Another set of contextual problems besets library users, particularly students doing all their research online—and some online resources make it far too easy to separate content from context. When you do full-text searches across a range of online book length texts and pay by the page to print or copy them, you're encouraged to ignore context. I believe that fully searchable full-text databases *generally* encourage out-of-context quotations. That's an unintended consequence, one of the problems that

arise from almost every solution. Does it make full-text databases bad ideas? Of course not—but it's another trap for thoughtful students and researchers. Yes, X wrote the words you cited; did they mean them to be taken literally?

Text bites may be more dangerous than sound bites, if only because most writers assume some degree of context. I can probably find truly outrageous sentences in the works of any effective writer, sentences that make the writer out to be something they aren't. That's always been true; unfortunately, it's getting easier.

Ebooks and Etext

Library Hi Tech 19:4

The final 2001 issue of *Library Hi Tech* included a cluster of articles on ebooks and related topics: nine articles, 85 print pages, probably around 60,000 words (equivalent to a 180-page book). If you have ready access to *Library Hi Tech*, the theme bears reading. Barring surprises, these may be the last citations from *Library Hi Tech:* MCB University Press seems to have realized that I'm no longer part of the editorial team, cutting off my free subscription. I downloaded these articles during a "free week," a brief period in February during which *Library Hi Tech* was freely available.

Karen Coyle (California Digital Library) kicks off with a fine article, "Stakeholders and standards in the e-book ecology: or, it's the economics, stupid!" She's using the meaning of ebook I find most congenial (but one that excludes print-on-demand books once they're printed): "a literary work in digital form, not the software and/or hardware that renders it for reading." She cites a longer AAP definition that I like even better, although it's too cumbersome for everyday use:

> An ebook is a literary work in the form of a digital object consisting of one or more standard unique identifiers, metadata, and a monographic body of content, intended to be published and accessed electronically.

Why do I like that definition? Because it presumes something longer than an essay ("a monographic body of content") and *explicitly* leaves out PoD ("…and accessed electronically").

Coyle discusses standards efforts related to ebooks and some of the problems with such efforts, particularly in a dismal marketplace where key players insist on proprietary solutions. The discussion can be dense (it's well-written but the topic's difficult) but there are some gems. "In the hours that I have spent attending meetings of e-book standards bodies I have never encountered discussions of authors or readers… There is also no talk of the intellectual content of e-books or of the knowledge that they might impart, not even over the traditional after-hours drink in the hotel bar."

In my words—definitely not Coyle's—the people working ebook standards are concerned about *product* and *protection*—and "product," not "book," is the appropriate name. That's a shame. Maybe that's why only nine percent of the members of the Open eBook Forum are publishers—just slightly more than the eight percent libraries and universities.

Consider that the Electronic Book eXchange (EBX) standard may be as "consumer-friendly" as you'll get. "Consumers *may or may not* have permission to lend or re-sell the books…" Coyle adds no editorial comment; that's not the purpose of her article. With XrML, a proprietary rights management language, "any rights not explicitly granted are…denied." Thus we move from first-sale rights to the one-sided world of click-through contracts. You didn't buy a book: you bought the right to view some text for a while. As one who prefers print books for most applications, maybe I should be happy: knowledgeable consumers will use draconian standards as one more reason to steer clear of ebooks. Still, it's sad.

Roberta Burk (Northern Illinois University Libraries) seems puzzled that clearly-superior ebooks aren't dramatically undermining print books in her "E-book devices and the marketplace: in search of customers." To me, this is a well-written example of the "there are no *legitimate* readability drawbacks" school of ebook advocacy. She goes to considerable lengths to describe the many supposed advantages of ebooks—and asserts, "leisure reading is *particularly well-suited* to the e-book format when designed to be used on hand-held devices." [Emphasis added.]

The drawbacks? "Perhaps the chief reason is that many people simply do not like to read from a computer screen." That's *it* for legitimate readability concerns, ignoring the whole body of real readability issues. Followed immediately by the KTD Kounter-argument: for the mutants (Kids These Days) who follow us, "who already enjoy *Winnie the Pooh* and *Richard Scarry* on their computers, electronic reading may well become the preferred format." (I thought Richard Scarry was an author, not a title, and I'd bet the overwhelming majority of kids read his books and *Winnie the Pooh* in print form—but never mind.)

Later, she says "If publishers honestly wanted to create an e-book revolution, they would now be making their digital titles widely available for all reading devices at prices that are less than half the cost of a p-book counterpart. *That would do it*."

Never mind that the "printedness" of traditional books represents perhaps one-seventh the price; just sell 'em for half. (Of course, publishers can do that—by deliberately putting bookstores out of business and selling only direct, thus eliminating distributor and store markups. I'm not sure I see that as a great step forward for humanity.)

We'll all buy ebooks if they're cheap. Maybe, maybe not. She goes on to cite Napster and make a truly curious argument: "If the music industry itself had provided a system as cheap and easy to use as Napster to begin with, they would very possibly have avoided the turmoil and costs of the past year." Hmm. Napster's *free*. It is certainly true that, if CDs were free for the taking, Napster could not possibly do economic damage to the record companies. Of course, the record companies would cease to exist and there would be no record stores to distribute those free CDs (or online stores—CDNow and Amazon have considerable costs as well), but Napster wouldn't be an issue.

Her last paragraph begins "Portable e-book readers may indeed be an idea whose time has come, but the product itself has a long way to go." Or maybe dedicated ebook appliances just don't make much sense in the general marketplace.

Incidentally, Burk does include what could be a data point for ebook appliance sales—if you can believe Henry Yuen of Gemstar. Supposedly, he told a May 2001 conference "his company sold 60,000 reading devices since they entered the market the previous September." I've never seen any other claim of a number that high for the REB devices and their Rocket/SoftBook predecessors combined (although Yuen rightly regards it as pitifully low), and RCA/Thomson (which actually builds the things) hasn't released any figures that I know of. Is it possible that REB sales actually reached as much as two to three percent of the "three to five million" target for 2001? If so, I'm surprised there aren't more data points out there.

Ray Lonsdale (University of Wales) and Chris Armstrong (Centre for Information Quality Management and Information Automation Limited) offer a well-researched article, "Electronic books: challenges for academic libraries." No particular comment; it's a solid piece addressing a specific issue.

The next one's a little odd given the current status of netLibrary. Lynn Silipigni Connaway (netLibrary) describes the evolution of netLibrary's collection and use in "A Web-based electronic book (ebook) library: the netLibrary model." She focuses on the growing purchase of ebooks by libraries rather than their minimal visibility in the general marketplace and includes PoD in her definition of ebooks. She seems to celebrate publishers' hopes that electronic textbooks "will suppress the used textbook market," which I'm sure delights students a bit less than it does publishers. The article includes an ambitious graph asserting a $3.2 *billion* marketplace for one category of ebooks in 2005, "academic/reference material for PCs and PDAs." (Even that aggressive forecast shows less than $500 million for trade downloadable ebooks and about a quarter-billion for "device-specific ebooks.") Ignoring some of the rhetoric in this article—and leaving aside such exotica as telematics (Web-enabled autos, but *of course* drivers won't be distracted while checking e-mail) and Web-enabled air conditioners, it's an interesting article that makes a number of good points.

I'm not surprised that the next article is a highlight. Dennis Dillon (University of Texas) completes his two-part "E-books: the University of Texas experience" in fine form, with a thoughtful discussion of ebook issues and real numbers regarding UT's use of netLibrary, before and after incorporating records into their online catalog. Dillon provides more light than heat; unlike me, he seems able to view this all dispassionately while maintaining a lucid style.

Here's a key data point. "The eight million printed volumes in the UT Austin libraries are removed from the shelves four million times a year, a 50 percent usage rate; whereas the 10,000 volumes in the Amigos netLibrary collection are accessed by UT Austin users over 20,000 times a year, a 200 percent usage rate." I'd love to look at currency—that is, taking a sample of UT's print collection with publication dates comparable to those of the netLibrary books, how does circulation compare? I would still expect netLibrary books to circulate more often, but perhaps at a lower multiple. Why not? A high percentage of undergraduate (and some graduate) library use is to cherry-pick, to find appropriate paragraphs for papers, not to immerse oneself in cover-to-cover reading; the pseudobook model of netLibrary suits that use very well. (I'm not putting it down. I was as lazy a student as anyone else who managed to finish UC Berkeley, and I certainly didn't spend my weekends reading optional books cover to cover.) For that matter, UT Austin's print circulation is refreshingly high: 50% annual turnover for a huge academic library is pretty good.

Susan Gibbons' "Growing competition for libraries" is brief and worth reading—but its primary focus, Questia, may be irrelevant. (Gibbons is at the University of Rochester and directs an LSTA-funded ebook evaluation project.) She touts Questia's "ample market research"—which raises the question of why Questia can't seem to get customers. She notes that the 35,000-title initial Questia collection was

weak and unbalanced and that, even with the mere 50% staff cut in mid-2001, it was unlikely to get to its quarter-million goal soon. The last I heard, Questia was down to 28 people and barely operational, None of which negates her comments about libraries paying attention to the "competition."

"Use of electronic monographs in the humanities and social sciences" comes from Questia itself—Carol Ann Hughes and Nancy L Buchanan. It's a straightforward study of how Questia books were used in three early months of the service. Personally, I'm a little nervous about one future plan: "reporting capability by user session" where "reporting" includes actual books used and *pages within those books*. That borders on breaching the confidentiality assumed in library use—but, of course, Questia's not a library. (And I may be reading something into the phrase—even assuming that Questia retains enough impetus to carry out further studies.)

Ana Arias Terry (Informed Strategies) starts "Electronic ink technologies: showing the way to a brighter future" with a sweeping pair of sentences: "The death of paper is in view. Or at least that is what some alarming headlines would have us believe." She quotes Microsoft's Dick Brass and his absurd claim that "the last paper edition of *The New York Times* will appear in 2018"—but then goes on to say that electronic ink is "the purported ringer of the death bell." Really? Brass is pushing Microsoft's ebook capabilities as used with Pocket PCs; I'm not sure what this has to do with electronic ink.

This long article discusses the technologies and companies involved in various forms of e-paper or e-ink. Terry also includes a range of comments from observers, mostly enthusiasts but with some range of balance. Interestingly, a representative of one of the primary e-paper companies has a balanced view: he sees the new technology as *adding* an option that's useful for some purposes, not as a wholesale replacement for either computer screens or printed books. You won't be surprised that other observers are more sanguine. A good article, with lots of information and relatively few off-the-wall assertions (from Terry, at least).

Finally, Garry J. Brown (Blackwell's Book Services) gets philosophical in "Beyond print: reading digitally"—but he claims that we're *now* changing our preference for sustained reading on paper. "*Previously*, poor screen resolution had made sustained reading tiresome and difficult…"—and for most of us, it still is, ClearType aside. (He drops in future developments; to my mind, the promise of OLED screens five years from now does nothing to improve *today's* electronic reading experience.) Naturally, KTD arises here as well. I don't wish to be too critical. Brown makes some good points and, ultimately, recognizes a complex future for reading—but his blithe claim that reading from the screen is plenty good enough today gives me pause.

An interesting cluster. I find the high points equally spaced: Coyle, Dillon, and Terry, each in a different area. As always, your mileage may vary.

Colors of the Rose

My apologies to M.J. Rose, but her weekly *Wired News* ebooks column continues to be a refreshing mix of hype and honesty on all aspects of ebooks. A few highlights from recent editions:

- On January 8, Rose notes that St. Martin's Press is putting up an "e-galley site" for *Acrobat*, a forthcoming novel by Gonzalo Lira. I never knew publishers turned out *so many* bound-galley copies—"anywhere from 100 to 1,000…for an average cost per galley of $10." The publisher will send out a few traditional printed galleys but make the whole thing available to booksellers and reviewers as a .lit file (the Microsoft Reader format). The marketing director gets it just about right: "While he is skeptical that people will want to read the whole book in Microsoft Reader, Baldacci said that if people can download the entire galley free of charge, they will be likely to read at least the first chapter." Apparently, a number of publishers now use PoD for "bound galley" copies; this may be a case where downloadable ebooks make even better sense. She also notes a useful clarification on Palm's "600 to 1000 units a day"—the total for 2001 was "almost 180,000 e-books," not a landslide but a real business. And a clever entrepreneur wants to peddle PoD services to charities, replacing the old photocopied cookbooks with professional-quality, low-risk books.
- How about "the classics on 1,500 words a day"? That's Classic-Novels, introduced January 15: more than 4,000 subscribers get novels in daily e-mail installments. The company's been serializing public-domain novels and recently started distributing a contemporary work. The price is right: subscriptions are free, but you can contribute using the Amazon Honor System. This edition also notes the early users of Ebrary's new library-oriented service, discussed in the "Ebook Library" section below.
- January 22: should author websites come from the publisher or the author? More than 90% come from authors—and I think that's appro-

priate. On the other hand, ALA Editions does a fine job; when I get back to writing books, it's unlikely that I'll create my own sites.

- "Who says e-books don't have a prayer?" OK, M.J., apologies withdrawn. That's her lead for January 29, discussing the Godspeed e-Bible, a Hiebook-based ebook appliance that "offers a holy host of Christian-specific applications" including Bible study software, "PrayerBuddy," a hymnal and other features. A followup on PoD says that Iuniverse has printed and sold 750,000 books while 1stbooks has printed and sold half a million—and, to muddy the waters, "it's the authors not the readers who are the big buyers—ordering on average 50 to 100 copies of their own titles." Self-publishing or vanity publishing? I think the distinction is important—and I think it's nearly impossible to make right at the moment.
- On February 5, Rose noted a fascinating way for publishers and others to get people hooked on books: Chapter-a-Day. You join a book club and receive an e-mail containing about five minutes' worth of a new book—the beginning of Chapter One. Next day, another email, another quick read. And so on until the end of the week. Then—buy the book or check it out at your library; another book starts next week. The club you join might come from the Books-a-Million bookstore, your local public library, or a college. More than 90,000 people receive Chapter-a-Day mailings. This seems like a all-win situation for readers, publishers, bookstores (including independents, since this process doesn't favor Amazon or B&N) and libraries—and, of course, Chapter-a-Day itself.

Future of Print Media Journal: RIP

Part of last August's "Catching up with ebooks, part three" (*Cites & Insights* 1:9) was a discussion of this fledgling journal and six of the articles and editorials in its first two quarterly issues. The journal grew out of a project at Kent State sponsored by LCD suppliers and other industrial firms that had yielded a handful of articles since its start in June 1998.

The Web site's still there (www.futureprint.kent.edu). After two "quarterly" issues, the online journal's fate appears in the "About Us" page on the site, quoted here in its entirety (typo and all):

> The Future of Print Media in maintained by Kent State University's Institute for CyberInformation. It contains articles written for the Future of Print Media online journal between June 1998 and July 2001. The journal is no longer published.

Articles continue to be available at this writing.

Ebook Library Updates

Just a few short updates this time around, after going into *way* too much detail on Netlibrary in January. By now you must know that OCLC *did* purchase Netlibrary and plans to make the eBook operation a division while turning MetaText digital textbooks into a for-profit subsidiary. A few non-library reports noted that OCLC doesn't plan to make a profit from Netlibrary's library operations—but recent developments also clarify OCLC's intention not to bleed money on the operation. They've raised prices significantly, both for annual licenses and for permanent licenses: a 66% increase in annual service fees (15% of purchase price rather than 9%) and 10% increase in "permanent" licenses—and the new "prepaid ongoing license" has key escape clauses in its permanence. If Netlibrary's model bankrupted them, then the changes make sense—and I wish OCLC well in what may be a worthwhile service.

In early January, ebrary announced the pilot launch of its new library-based model, ebrarian 2.0. It's mostly "around here"—the Peninsula Library System and Stanford, but also Yale. The new ebrary model combines an annual license fee with the previously announced per-page fees when readers want to use or print portions of a book. Documents will use pdf, assuring fidelity to the original book design.

Finally, a January 21 *Houston Chronicle* story confirms the rumor that Questia is down to 28 workers, "just enough to maintain its Web site." When a company lays off 40 of its 68 workers (down from 300 at one point) *without severance*, the end is near. Apparently, Ken Lay is still on Questia's board. I'm sure that reassures potential investors no end.

Miscellany

The *Chronicle of Higher Education* for January 23, 2002 reports on an interesting new ebook initiative from the CIC, under Tom Peters' leadership. The group is pooling funds to build a prototype for producing ebook versions of works published by their university presses—about a thousand new scholarly works a year. CIC members would get the ebooks free; other academic libraries might be able to buy them "for a fee that would help pay to run the operation." Librarians and university press staffers are working together on the initiative.

Tom Peters is much more of an ebook enthusiast than I am. If he's reading this, he's probably waiting for my cheap shot. Sorry, Tom, but no cheap shot is in order. This initiative strikes me as a genuinely good idea—both as a way to build one of the

worthwhile niches for ebooks and as a *great* way for libraries to work together with university presses. I hope it works out, and suspect that it will.

For some reason, two closely-related items were posted January 23 on eBookWeb—both featuring Glenn Sanders on the wonders of ebooks. Sanders *loves* ebooks—he uses a Rocket eBook, a REB1100, and an HP Jornada Pocket PC. What's needed? Here's where it gets interesting: "High resolution, low-power, low-cost color displays (150 to 200dpi for under $100)" and a whole lot more. Of course, 200dpi is *still* far below the worst print resolution. When will we get cheapo color displays with twice the resolution of today's displays? Who knows? Sanders thinks he does: 2004 or 2005 at the latest. As any good ebook advocate must, Sanders later belittles those who "are romantically attached to pBooks" and says he considers his Rocket "more of a friend than any individual pBook could be."

That's from an interview. A separate article, "The future of eBooks and information," goes beyond 2004 to bring us the following: "By 2010, wearable computers ('wearables') with full-time wide-band wireless Internet access will be ubiquitous." Tuck this page away for eight years, and see whether everyone is wearing a "high-resolution head mounted display" or an arm-mounted flexible display, all with full-time wide-band wireless access. Naturally, these devices will have "nearly 100% accurate" voice recognition software. There's more—we'll all be in contact all of the time, even when we're trekking through a jungle or lounging on a tropical beach (his examples), writing about our adventures with our voices. "And sometime, we will all want to turn off our wearable, and curl up with a good old eNovel on our old, dedicated reading device, while we unwind from our wired day…" Print books? Sanders has said before that they're dinosaurs (not in those words). He sees this future as a wonderful thing.

Trends and Quick Takes

Why Hard Disks Survive

Shouldn't flash RAM have replaced old-fashioned electromechanical disks years ago? That was certainly the projection some years back, and flash RAM prices have been coming down. Michael J. Miller excitedly informs us (in his January 29, 2002 "Forward Thinking" column in *PC Magazine*) that, in a few months, you'll be able to buy a *one gigabyte* CompactFlash card. For $799.

That's remarkable, and Miller's probably right that the RAM card is more durable than IBM's 1GB Microdrive (which also fits in a CF slot). But for more general use, how much high-speed disk storage can you buy for $799? I can't answer the question for a few months from now, but as of late January the answer's clear enough: at least 320GB (in two drives), with money left over. That's more than a 300-to-one price differential—much *worse* than in the bad old days.

Google Popups?

"Search for 'moving' on Google, and you may be surprised to find your results covered by a pop-up ad for MonsterMoving.com. Has Google, which prides itself on its advertising policy, finally succumbed to the pop-up craze?" That's the lead on a February 7, 2002 *Wired News* story. The answer is no—and Google is outraged by what's happening.

The culprit is FlashTrack, whose makers claim that it monitors queries on 27 search engines on three million computers, popping up ads related to specific search terms. Apparently, nobody's quite sure how FlashTrack gets installed—the company won't say, but it does claim that its partners are supposed to disclose installation of FlashTrack when the accompanying program is being installed. What accompanying program? Possibly a file-sharing application like KaZaa or some other program specially designed for ethically challenged computer users.

FlashTrack bypasses Ad-aware's sensors and won't uninstall using Windows procedures. The company's "uninstall program" looks like a Trojan horse to McAfee. If you can find a file "FTAPP.DLL" on your disk, delete it and the popups should stop.

The *Wired News* article (by Paul Boutin) calls this kind of program "scumware." That's too kind.

The Details

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