Cites & Insights
Crawford at Large

Perspective
DVD Durability Survey Responses and Comments

I've been writing about DVD since a year or two before the medium began. (See the Silver Edition, cites.boisestate.edu/civ2i11.pdf, for details.) My third article for *American Libraries* was "Up to speed on DVD," and the subtitle to that article was "It could—and should—be your library's next medium." For most academic and public libraries, I believe that's happened, and I continue to believe it's a good thing. But DVD isn't a perfect medium. In that September 1999 article, I had this to say about DVD durability:

> DVD offers a much more durable video storage medium than videocassettes. As with CD, there's no physical contact between the playing head and the disc—and, as with CD, the data surface is protected by chemically inert plastic.

I ignored one critical detail: Library circulation turns out to be nothing like "normal use," at least in some libraries. After seeing indications of problems in Publib postings and talking to a library DVD distributor about the situation, I did a survey about DVD durability on the Publib and Videolib lists. That survey was also posted on an Indiana list.

The September 2002 "Crawford Files" is based on the results of that survey, but those summary results make up less than one-third of the column. The working title for that column was "A DVD is not a Frisbee"; that may have changed. If you're an ALA member, you'll receive the September 2002 *American Libraries* some time in early September (if you haven't already). If you're not, *American Libraries* posts and archives my files at www.ala.org. I won't attempt the actual URL; go to www.ala.org, click on the *American Libraries* link (which should be somewhere on the home page); then go to "The Crawford Files" from that page.

In the column I say, "Many libraries have found DVDs to be shorter-lived than videocassettes—to the extent that a few librarians suggest going back to VHS. This column isn't a *mea culpa*, but clarifications are in order four years later." After providing a summary of the survey responses I say, "More detail on the survey responses appears in the September 2003 *Cites & Insights*." And so it does.

The more I think about it, the more I want to change one word in the first quoted sentence in the previous paragraph: *Some* libraries have found DVDs to be shorter-lived than videocassettes.

The column notes the primary reasons that DVDs could be more vulnerable to some forms of damage than CDs: The polycarbonate layer is only half as thick as on a CD, and most DVD packages use press-to-release hub locks that cause considerable stress on the weakest portion of the DVD if a user doesn't know how to use them. The biggest problem, I believe, is that (some) patrons (in some libraries) don't respect DVDs—they treat them like frisbees, give them to their kids to play with, and generally abuse them.

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Expanded Survey Results

I received 22 usable responses to the original survey. Once I decided to add this supplementary discussion, I sent out a new, briefer survey to involve more people—extending the response deadline from May 1 to August 1. I received five additional responses during that period, for a total of 27 responses. One or two responses were from colleges; the rest were from public libraries.

1. Systematic Information on Disc Failure

> Do you have systematic (as opposed to anecdotal) information on discs that become unusable? (Followed by breakdowns for ranges of circulation for children's discs and adult or all.)

Most libraries do not. Here's what I could gather from the handful of responses other than "No":

➤ One library with roughly 1,000 circulating DVDs had 12 become unusable over three months, and the librarian thought this was fairly typical—indicating a failure rate of 5%. Those 12 included four juvenile, seven adult feature films, and one adult nonfiction. Two discs failed very early (fewer than 10 circs); one juvenile disc failed early (10-25); most adult titles failed with 25-49 or 50-99 circulations; and one juvenile and adult disc (each) failed after more than 100 circulations.

➤ Two libraries reported one disc (each) becoming unusable out of the circulating collection.

➤ Two libraries reported failures within fewer than 10 circulations.

➤ One response noted that most (almost all) failures came after more than 100 circulations. Of the group that provided answers to the first question, this is the *only* one that *did* consider early DVD failure to be a problem, "Because it seems likely that it was a factory defect."

2. Is Early DVD Failure a Serious Problem?

In "The Crawford Files," I summarized the first 22 responses as being half "Yes" and half "No." That may oversimplify the responses. Here's a more complete analysis, including additional responses:

Nine said "No" without comment. Seven said "Yes" without comment.

Four offered comments I would interpret as "no" or "maybe", as follows:

➤ "No, not failure, but flaws are becoming [a problem]"

➤ "No, the percentage that breaks is not much higher than for other a-v materials. We do have titles returned to us however…"

➤ "It is a problem, if not yet serious. We get a number of complaints of DVDs not working by the first person to check them out. Many only last a few times. *It is not any worse than VHS* but we were hoping for better. Sometimes the problem is the patron's equipment or lack of knowledge in how to use the equipment or disc features." [Emphasis added.]

➤ "No. *Our biggest problem is how the patron treats the DVD.*"

Seven (including second-round responses) offered comments that boil down to "Yes":

➤ "It is becoming enough of a problem to frustrate me. I have had to replace 7 so far. Many others we have 'cleaned' with Disc Doctor."

➤ "Yes, it is a serious problem for children's DVDs"

➤ "Yes, very serious—the DVDs seem more prone to scratches than CDs or CD-ROMs."

➤ "*Yes*. While we have videocassettes that have circulated more than 200 times, I can't see that most DVDs will ever get that far. The nature of the packaging for videocassettes is inherently protective; DVDs are essentially the opposite."

➤ "Yes, they fail *much* faster than VHS, which presents a real problem with what seems to be a switch in formats."

➤ "Yes, we have not found them to be as trustworthy as VHS."

➤ "Yes. Numerous scratches, often just from being shipped to us."

I would total this as 14 "Yes" and 13 "No," although it's worth noting that scratches do not inherently imply failure. (The librarian who put quotes around "cleaned" in mentioning Disk Doctor is perceptive: While this inexpensive device can make some discs playable, it does so by grinding down the protective plastic layer, a process that can't be repeated very often on the thin plastic of a DVD. For that matter, the comment about packaging is also right on the money: The long DVD box almost requires a press-to-release hub lock to function properly, and that press-to-release lock is a major problem area.)

This question is the heart of the survey, but I asked for more information.

3. Categories of Early Failure

Do failed DVDs frequently fall into these categories, and is one category predominant? (Followed by suggested categories, clarified in the follow-up)

Some first-round responses that noted "broken or cracked hubs" as a cause of failure apparently meant the *hub locks*—the devices that hold the disc hubs in place. While broken or cracked hub locks are problematic and will tend to destroy the DVD (by scratching it repeatedly), I was particularly interested in whether the hubs themselves were cracking, because I already had some reason to believe this was a problem.

Why? Because some CD users just pull up on the CD to take it out of the jewel box. While that's not as easy on the CD as pushing down on the center flange, it's not terrible. With DVDs, on the other hand, the center device is usually (not always) a *locking* mechanism—the plastic spokes actually cover a portion of the disc hub until you press down on the lock. When you pull up on the DVD instead of pushing down on the lock, you're exerting substantial pressure on the thinnest part of the disc—and if the hub cracks, the disc will soon become useless.

Here's how I summarized the early responses in "The Crawford Files": "Most failures come from

scratches on the playing surface or broken and cracked hubs. Several libraries noted broken hubs as the *primary* cause of failure." Here, a *mea culpa* is in order: Apparently, a stray "(yes" made its way onto some of the survey forms next to 3b, leading me to misinterpret the results—but it's still true that "several" libraries considered broken hubs as the predominant cause, although even more checked scratches or dirt.

The responses in more depth:

➢ Seventeen responses identified a predominant cause of failure. The causes stated:
Scratches or dirt: Ten
Broken or cracked hubs: Five
Shattered discs: One
No visible damage: One.

➢ Eleven of the seventeen also identified additional causes of failure. Adding to those the nine responses that didn't show a clear predominant cause, causes total:
Scratches or dirt: Fourteen
Gouges: Thirteen
Broken or cracked hubs: Ten
No visible damage: Ten
Shattered discs: Two

➢ One response didn't show any causes of failure. One (included above) noted that if a gouge is deep enough that you can see through the disc, you can be fairly sure it's not repairable.

Ignoring predominance, you could add this up as the following causes of failure:
Scratches or dirt: 24
Broken or cracked hubs: 15
Gouges: 13
No visible damage: 11
Shattered discs: 3

This finding is interesting because of some early anecdotes saying discs were coming back in pieces all the time. This happens—but it doesn't seem to happen very often. (One respondent added the comment that, when that happened, it was because a patron ran over the disc with a car. I suspect the other causes are similarly dramatic and abusive!)

4. Deciding to Retire a DVD

On what basis do you retire DVDs (other than shattered or destroyed-hubs)? (Suggestions followed in the first round only.)

➢ Two libraries rely on physical inspection.
➢ Three retire a disc when more than one patron asserts that it's unplayable.
➢ Nobody accepts a single assertion that the DVD is unplayable, unless it's broken.

Fifteen libraries use some combination of cleaning (presumably washing, by hand or machine), repair or

resurfacing, physical inspection, and attempts to play on a "known good" player. Some libraries physically inspect a DVD each time it's returned. Most take steps when a problem is reported. A few of the comments, edited slightly, noting that seven libraries did not respond (in some cases because they don't have problems):

➢ "We clean it with liquid cleaner, also put it on a player and watch it (problems usually just stop the disc so watching it isn't a big deal). If the disc stops or distorts we then use [The Edge, a $1,000 machine] and resurface and polish it. Our fix rate is 1:3."
➢ "We inspect the DVD then repair the scratched surface and clean it. So far after testing the DVDs they have played nicely."
➢ "We retire when the disc will not play in our player after it has been cleaned, inspected and polished."
➢ "We inspect DVDs electronically [and polish or remove scratches] using DiscCheck, then inspect them again… If a DVD fails the second inspection it is discarded."
➢ "We use Dr. Disc to buff out mild scratches, and send them out to an independent for polishing if the scratches are deeper. If he can't get them out then we retire them. *We have retired 4 discs in three years* [from a collection of 650 titles] due to wear related damage…"
➢ "I check some of them on a DVD player here or on my own player at home. I used to check them on my PC here until our tech person confirmed to me that there is software at work on my PC trying to correct little problems. I think some DVD players may have similar 'software' but I'm not sure. In any case, I did find that some that played fine on my PC did have problems on a regular DVD player. If I think something is more or less OK, I mark the package in case it comes back with a complaint again."
➢ "We purchased a [very expensive] disc cleaning machine… after six months we have not been able to get it to work. We take discs that a patron has complained about and put them in a PC with a DVD drive to see if we can play it. If we cannot, we discard the disc. If we can, it goes back into circulation."
➢ "We do not take the user's word since we find that…some users have more sensitive players."
➢ "Inspection by DiscCheck, attempted repair by same, and then final inspection…"

5. Preventive and Corrective Measures

Do you take any of the following preventive or corrective measures? (List offered in first round only.)

Among libraries that responded to the yes/no questions:

12 libraries wash DVDs

8 use treatments such as Disc Doctor and the RTI system

7 provide patron education (slips inside DVD cases or labels on the carriers)

7 replace DVD boxes with cases that don't use locking hubs

6 use liquid treatments of some sort

3 use optical paste kits

Several incorporate corrective measures in the inspection measures noted above, e.g., DiscCheck and The Edge.

Some comments, noting that neither I nor any librarian here is endorsing any product:

➢ "[Of liquid treatments] I like the Proline Disc Protector Kit."

➢ "The Disc Dr. attachment parts were so fragile, we broke three of them without much use."

➢ "[We use the] Azuradisc 1600 buffing machine."

➢ "We limit the DVD collection to donations."

➢ "We place a response slip in DVD case for next patron."

➢ "Generally wipe it off (correctly!) with a special cloth. This helps us to be able to know exactly who is to blame when a disc comes back bad."

➢ "Usually once the DVD starts having problems, it doesn't last long."

➢ "We have a Disc Doctor, The Edge, and an RTI… We begin with cleaning cloths and gradually go to the strong polisher as needed."

➢ "The DiscCheck works well (it is expensive though)"

➢ "[Abrasive treatments] not satisfactory."

➢ "The scratch removal machine manufactured by Azuradisc is very impressive."

➢ "After trying many methods, we now use the dry CD/DVD FastWipes by Allsop….Quick and easy and picks up most dirt. If quite dirty we also use Disc-polish spray (AVS supply) with the wipes."

➢ "We have put together a DVD repair kit for each branch that contains information and instructions on how to clean (for instance washing, freezing),"pinkies" (alcohol wipes), cleaning cloth, Turtle Wax, and a motorized Skip Doctor."

➢ "I heard that Pledge furniture polish puts a nice protective coat on discs that guards against light surface scratches; we are going to play around with this and maybe wax the whole collection."

➢ "We have used abrasive treatments. We have also used toothpaste and soft cloth—works just as well."

➢ "We found that the Disc Dr. was not as effective as the Azuradisc that we use."

Caveat: I have never used any of the machines mentioned here—or, for that matter, anything other than hot water, liquid hand soap, and tissues to clean and dry DVDs (from Netflix; the ones I buy rarely need cleaning).

6. Do DVDs fail faster than CDs?

Yes, based on the results of this survey.

19 said that, relative to circulation, DVDs failed more frequently

4 said CDs failed more often than DVDs relative to circulation

3 said they were about the same.

Noteworthy comments on this question, edited in some cases:

➢ "We have more problems with stealing and loss of CDs than with actual damage. Our DVDs are kept at the front desk to stealing has not been a problem." [This library has had one DVD fail in the year it's been circulating them.]

➢ "In this library, DVDs are much more intensely used and failure is generally patron/staff driven."

➢ "CDs definitely fail faster, although that may be due to more frequent playing and higher incidence of abuse (not placing them back in the jewel case as soon as they have been played)."

➢ "CDs for music were always single sided and were thicker, thus they broke much less often."

➢ "DVDs seem to be more sensitive in playback."

➢ "DVDs fail more frequently than music CDs but about the same as spoken word CDs."

7. Other Comments

I included an open invitation to add other comments. A few of those (edited) comments:

➢ "I believe the cracked hubs come from users' unfamiliarity with the operational difference between CD jewel cases and DVD cases."

➢ "I'd say that one-third of the unsupported reported-damaged items are a way of subtly expressing personal opinion about the content of the film, and the other two-thirds are from smudged/soiled discs. Hub breakage is a large part of truly damaged items—both push-to-release and squeeze-to-eject hubs are difficult for healthy adults to use, so the arthritic, elderly, young and/or impatient are bound to have problems. Tell the industry!"

- ➢ "The issue of an aftermarket for DVDs seems to be serious. We have a large number of first time library card users who check out the maximum allowed number of DVDs and never return them. Word of mouth is that the after-market pays $5 to $7 per DVD. If you can check out 10, as in my library, that is a nice bundle for a needy person."
- ➢ "I wish parents would not allow their children to put in or remove discs from DVD players… The most damage comes from children scratching the discs…or using them as toys."
- ➢ "I don't feel they hold up to heavy library circulation… I wish we could get manufacturers to make them more resistant to damage and scratches… Education of borrowers doesn't make a difference, especially when they let their 5 or 6 year old [handle them]."
- ➢ "I think the differences in people's DVD players and user error actually account for a lot of DVD failure. Of course, it's just a theory…"
- ➢ "Regardless of the special handling required, faculty and students love this format. The film classes love the 'extras' that come with the discs… The language classes love the foreign language options."

Thanks!

I would like to thank all those who responded. Responses came from Illinois, New York (several), North Carolina, Indiana (several), Connecticut, Washington (state), as well as those noted below.

Special thanks to those willing to be quoted, even though I chose not to associate comments with names: Sue Ayers, Clyde, NY; Judy Decker, Quincy, IL; William R. Blohm, Elgin, IL; Lori Stevens, Orem, UT; Linda Hartman, Wakarusa, IN; Becky Tatar, Aurora, IL; Jo Sibley, Plainfield, IN; Kevin Crothers, Charleston, SC; Linda Stevens, Houston, TX; Paul Duckworth, Springfield-Greene County, MO; Marsha Loyer, Mishawaka, IN; Betty Waznis, San Diego, CA; and Melanie Richardson, Spencer, IN.

Comments

What conclusions can we draw from all this?

If you're a pessimist, you'll stress that just over half of the respondents feel that early DVD failure is a problem. You could generalize from that and say that DVDs are not well suited to the rigors of public library use.

If you're an optimist, you might note that some 5,000 public librarians received this survey on PUBLIB, with hundreds more on the Indiana list and Videolib. Just *fourteen* out of those thousands found early DVD failure to be a problem—in a survey that would tend to elicit negative responses, since those who are having problems are more likely to respond.

The truth is probably in the middle. I asked people to respond if their libraries had been circulating DVDs for at least a year in order to get meaningful responses. That may mean that fewer than half of PUBLIB members were eligible to respond. I do believe that librarians having trouble with the medium are more likely to respond, particularly since I invited them to answer any portion of the survey: all they had to do was send back "2. YES!" and I would count it as a response.

Is there a problem? Yes. DVDs aren't indestructible. There are clear reasons that they may be somewhat more fragile than CDs in real-world use.

Comparisons between DVDs and VHS videocassettes are tricky. Were those 200-circulation videocassettes *really* in good condition, or were they simply "playable" the way many public library LPs were "playable" after 20 or 30 uses. They didn't play *well*, and they could damage good home equipment, but if you didn't care much about quality, they did play. I do borrow CDs from the library—they can't *possibly* hurt my equipment—and I might borrow DVDs if all the interesting ones weren't checked out. They can't hurt my equipment either.

I'd guess most library users faced with a worn out VHS videocassette would either not notice that it was no good or just return it without mentioning anything. But when your $65 DVD player stops partway through a movie, you'll go back and say, "This doesn't work!"

You'll be right, too. The DVD doesn't work at that time on your drive. Maybe it doesn't work because your kids used it as a Frisbee replacement or stepped on it—or because the previous borrower did the same. Maybe it doesn't work because it's dirty and you don't know how to clean it (or don't care). Maybe it doesn't work because it's been scratched somewhat and your player is marginal—that's particularly possible if it's a two-layer disc (as many hit movies are) and it hangs up at the layer change. Maybe the next borrower won't have any problems. Or maybe it doesn't work because it's been worn out through user abuse or defective packaging.

I get most of my DVDs from Netflix. We've been watching a movie a week for almost two years now—just about a hundred. Many have required washing. Two have been defective—one we had to give up on, one where we had to skip forward a minute to watch the rest of the flick. If those discs weren't achieving at least 20 to 50 circulations each, Netflix couldn't stay in business. Hub locks aren't issues for Netflix, as discs are always in Tyvek

sleeves—but with no "hard cases" or anything other than a paper wrapper to protect them from the U.S. Postal Service and Netflix users. If DVDs circulate many times without damage through Netflix, they can through public libraries.

Hints from the Comments

One wistful librarian noted that DVDs aren't worse than VHS—"but we were hoping for better." So we were, and I helped lead some of you to expect better. When used properly, there's still every reason to believe that a DVD should last indefinitely. "When used properly" covers a lot of ground, and may be too much to expect from public library patrons. Or maybe not. Maybe, with a little education (and possibly replacement cases), DVDs can achieve the kind of lifespan that they're capable of.

"Our biggest problem is how the patron treats the DVD."

The librarian who was told that DVD-ROM drives try to correct little problems was on to something—but, in fact, *all* DVD players correct little problems. Every DVD player is a specialized computer; DVDs are data storage devices. The DVD standard includes enormous amounts of error-correction capability, more than for audio CDs. But different drives operate differently, both in terms of software and hardware forgiveness. That's partly a matter of competition and price pressures.

VHS was introduced in 1976. DVD was introduced in 1996 (for most purposes, in 1997). In 2002, you could buy a DVD player for less than $100; today, you can buy one for $45. How many years did it take for a VHS VCR to get down to an equivalent price in today's dollars? Certainly not six; probably not 16. Most DVD players are dirt-cheap. Unsurprisingly, some DVD players aren't top-notch.

Some preventive and corrective measures do seem to work for some libraries. Cleaning is the easiest corrective measure. Non-destructive cleaning and repair can do wonders in some cases; abrasive repair can also work, but only once or twice.

Can manufacturers make DVDs more scratch-resistant? That's not clear. At least one brand of *recordable* DVD claims greater scratch resistance and it's possible that a similar process could work for pressed DVDs. Given that short-run DVDs are becoming more feasible, we could see a future of "library edition" DVDs. Don't hold your breath.

DVDs aren't going away. Don't expect VHS to stage a revival. DVDs offer much better picture quality, show the picture as it was filmed, and involve the viewer through significant extras. Note the final bulleted comment above, from a college librarian— and consider the speed with which DVD collections

circulate. I can't imagine a college film studies program *not* moving to DVD as quickly as possible, given the difference for students of cinema (who presumably don't run over DVDs with their cars or step on all that often).

A year or two ago, I suggested we'd start to see a drop-off in simultaneous release of movies on VHS within five years. That looks to be about right. Current speculation is that some studios plan to drop same-day VHS in two to three years. DVDs should be a primary medium for the next decade or two. They may not be perfect, but with some care and education they do work for public libraries.

Perspective
Weblogging: A Tool, Not a Medium

A mini-tempest has sprung up recently *on* a few weblogs *about* weblogging—specifically, whether there is or should be a set of standards for how weblogs are maintained. There's nothing new about weblogs spending too much time on weblogging—that seems endemic to the "blogosphere." This one's a little different, and watching the controversy reminded me of a theme from my abandoned media book:

> Most of what we think of as individual media are actually clusters of related media, and it damages our understanding of a medium to clump related media together.

The Controversy

One of the great people and divas of the weblog world has a habit of changing and deleting entries in their weblog, not just to correct spelling errors but to change the substance of the entry. This hotshot (call them Blogger A) is also known for being argumentative and draws a lot of feedback—which, of course, can be made to seem foolish when the log entry being commented on suddenly changes or disappears.

Another member of the blogerati (Blogger B) took Blogger A to task for post-facto changes—and went so far as to propose a rulebook or code of practice for weblogs. I happened upon Blogger B's entry, thought about it, and chose not to print it out and comment on it here. A number of people seconded Blogger B's notion and expanded on it. Various sets of policies and rulebooks appeared here and there— either policies for a single weblog or proposed policies for webloggers as a group.

More recently, Blogger C (a long-time friend) offered a distinctive essay suggesting that a rulebook for weblogs was a Really Bad Idea. Blogger C doesn't

believe it makes sense to think of all webloggers as a group—and Blogger C finds the idea of a single rule-book for bloggers artificial.

I'm sure there have been dozens (more likely hundreds or thousands) of other threads on this controversy in other weblogs. For all I know, it may have been slashdotted. One characteristic of zillions of weblogs and widespread "blogrolling," and people gathering up hundreds or thousands of weblog entries via RSS, is that notions (memes, ideas, silliness, what have you) spread across the Internet with a speed that makes wildfire look sluggish.

Why I'm On Blogger C's Side

Blogger C doesn't think of all weblogging as connected, doesn't feel the need for an explicit rule-book, and would just as soon not have someone else's rulebook made explicit. I believe Blogger C is suggesting that explicit rules would take much of the life out of weblogs.

I agree with that argument, but there's more to it. One argument goes back to one of the better points in "A World of Ends" (see *Cites & Insights* 3:10)—"Adding value to the Internet lowers its value." That's a point that needs to be remembered when people talk about fixing spam or fixing email as well. (See "Scholarly Article Access")

If there's a rulebook for weblogs, you get one of two undesirable results:

➢ There's no way to enforce the rules (because no value has been added), but those who choose to ignore them are treated by self-appointed Keepers of the Blogosphere as outsiders and malefactors, *regardless* of the content or quality of their weblogs.

➢ There *are* ways to enforce the rules, at which point innovation in weblogs begins to cease. New weblogs are nothing but new instances of existing weblog varieties. That's true of most new weblogs already, but you do see truly original ideas at times. That's less likely once there's a rulebook.

I think that's enough reason to oppose a rulebook for weblogs. Another killer reason is related to my theme above. Weblogs are no more one medium than print serials are one medium, possibly even less so. Weblogging is a tool (or set of tools). Those tools are used to create many different media; all those media have in common is:

➢ They're on the internet

➢ They consist of chunks for which the default access is reverse chronological, last in, first out.

I can't think of any other characteristic that's true of all weblogs, unless you begin the vile process of drawing circles to keep people out. "Well, that's not

really a weblog, because [it doesn't have links] [the essays are too long] [it's only updated once a week] [there's no comment function]…"

Maybe it's better to think of broader media as being tools or carriers. So, for example, the printed book is a toolkit; there are many different media that use that form. Similarly, the print serial is a toolkit that encompasses vastly different media. The same is true for television and radio.

What does that have to do with establishing ethics and rules for weblogging? Even if a medium is well established and there are ways to deal with exceptions to the rules, a rulebook or guidelines only make sense for *one* medium—not for every medium that uses a common toolkit. "Talking heads make bad television"—true for network scripted entertainment television (one medium), nonsense for many other media that use television's toolkit.

I believe weblogs that purport to be forms of journalism should have some of the ethical characteristics of other journalistic media, which *normally* includes running corrections rather than changing an item once it's appeared. But most weblogs are not intended as journalism. For weblogs intended primarily as diaries, I see no ethical bar to changing or deleting entries. For weblogs that are largely storytelling or webloggers that choose not to define their sphere, there shouldn't be explicit rules.

Cites & Insights is a zine, not a weblog, and I follow the model of print serials. Once an issue has been posted, I regard the text as inviolable *even if stupidly wrong*. When I copied the first 29 issues from the old AT&T Worldnet website (where they still reside) to the new boisestate website, I made a single textual change in each issue: The URL in the last line of the last paragraph of the last page. I also corrected one or two running footer errors—but, *deliberately*, did not correct any of the spelling, grammar, or more serious errors in any of the issues.

If I had a weblog, I probably wouldn't be so scrupulous—depending on the particular medium I thought that weblog belonged to.

In a semi-related controversy (both involve Blogger A), some of the people sneering at a pricey invitational conference on blogging have made points similar to mine. For example, John Kusch: "A convention for blogging is like a convention for…I dunno, handwriting. Or cassette tape recording."

Bibs & Blather

There's something new at cites.boisestate.edu: Tables of contents for all issues of *Cites & Insights*, with a

link to each issue. You'll find a "Contents for All Issues" link at the top of the home page, or you can go directly to cites.boisestate.edu/citoc.htm. The table for each issue shows the name of each essay and the pages on which it appears.

Admittedly, some names don't tell you much about what's included, although most Perspectives and major topical essays have reasonably descriptive names. I'm hoping newcomers to *Cites & Insights* will find the contents page useful in exploring back issues—and it includes *all* issues, up to and including the current one. (Someone want to do an RSS feed that keys to citoc.htm rather than oldvol.htm?)

If citoc doesn't provide enough detail, there's an easy solution for previous volumes: Download the index, print it off, and use that as a detailed guide, albeit with starting pages only.

Glancing Back:
1, 2, 5, 10, and 15 Years

September 2002

Ah, the Berman Bill: Not new at that point, but getting lots of reactions. "Avast, Ye Maties!" was my title for the lead Copyright Currents—and in addition to Berman's move to make hacking legal for Big Media, there was the temporary court order for the maker of ReplayTV to track its users viewing habits and report them to networks and studios.

I also introduced "The Library Stuff"; grumped about the Segway (which seems to be going nowhere slowly, but its creator still claims to believe it's revolutionary); and noted the sad passing of *NewBreed Librarian*. I talked about Kids These Days and the future of reading in "The Crawford Files" and offered the first of two "Copyright Out of Whack" essays in "disContent."

September 2001

The lead essay was another farewell, this time to *The Industry Standard*—still the only new-business magazine I miss. I talked about the Tasini case and the unfortunate behavior of the New York *Times*, noted that 15" LCD displays had finally dropped to $500 (a breakthrough price), decided to adopt stable URLs for *Cites & Insights*, and gave up on providing complete URLs for all articles cited.

The best value in a tier-one midrange computer was a $1,500 Gateway with a 1.6GHz Pentium-4, 40GB 7200rpm hard disk, 128MB RAM, 64MB graphics RAM, a CD/RW drive, and a 16"-viewable CRT—and MS Works Suite, Ethernet, and modem.

Elsewhere, "disContent" was a little piece about metametajournalism; you can read it in the October 2002 *Cites & Insights.*

September 1998

The Perspective in *Crawford's Corner* was "winning by definition," in this case illustrated by Larry Ellison's claim that network computers absolutely, positively *were* taking over the marketplace. Why? Because Ellison defines any computer with an internet browser as a network computer. "In the next episode, we'll talk about convergence: it's a big success, because now all it means is that different fields use common technologies. Wheelbarrows, bikes, and cars are all converging: they depend on wheels." I wish that was a joke.

Product notes included optical read-only memory, which was supposedly on its way to market but never really emerged, a 14" desktop LCD display (for $1,459!), the absurdity of "near-CD sound" at 28.8kbps, and the $8,455 Xybernaut 133P "wearable computer." DVDs were *finally* coming to the marketplace in force (but not DVD-ROMs), and DivX was briefly there as well.

Summer 1993

"Taking it with you," a "Looking Back" feature in *Library Hi Tech,* discussed the early years of portable computers—starting with the Morrow Pivot, arguably the first laptop (1985). It was a fine design for its time: a 3.33MHz 80C86, 640K RAM, two 360K diskette drives, and a 480x128-pixel display showing 16 lines of type (80 characters each). Including DOS and NewWord, it listed for $2,795 and weighed 13 pounds. You could even buy a "portable" PC with a color screen: a $2,599 Sanyo with an 8" 640x200 CRT. It weighed *38 pounds* (and had 256K RAM and two 360K diskettes for storage). Times have changed. Even in early 1993, when I wrote the article, you could buy a four-pound notebook with 128MB hard disk (huge for the time), 8MB RAM, one microdiskette drive, 2400bps modem, a 50MHz 486, and a 10" screen offering 64 shades of gray—for a mere $3,899.

LITA Newsletter issues were always dated early; the Summer issue included the details of ALA Annual programs from LITA, while the Fall issue included reports. Program topics included Z39.50, hypertext, client/server architecture, recon, and CD-ROM interoperability.

Summer 1988

The "Common Sense Personal Computing" article raised the question, "Is common sense computing possible in 1988?" I revisited the trends of the previous five years, noted the utter confusion of the PC marketplace at that point (with nine distinct segments still in the marketplace, including the Commodore 64 and Amiga, the Apple II and Macintosh,

the Atari ST, IBM PS/2, "XT-compatibles" and "AT-compatibles" (there were no XTs or ATs at that point), and workstations. Shortly thereafter, I dropped the "common sense" title.

LITA program topics that year included microcomputer templates, CD-ROM (which still needed to be spelled out), standards, recon, "why use electronic mail?" and the uses of electronic bulletin boards in libraries. My editorial was on Post-it® notes and Causin softstrips (being used at the time in *Library Hi Tech News*). Well, one out of two ain't bad: Post-its are still important.

Scholarly Article Access

Sabo, SOAF, SOAN and More

"To amend title 17, United States Code, to exclude from copyright protection works resulting from scientific research substantially funded by the Federal Government." That's the Public Access to Science Act, H.R. 2613, introduced by Rep. Sabo (D-Minn.) and sometimes referred to as the Sabo Bill.

The version of the legislation posted by Peter Suber to fos-forum on June 30, 2003 is brief and includes interesting elements. I didn't know, for example, that

> The United States Government spends $45,000,000,000 a year to support scientific and medical research whose product is new knowledge for the public benefit.

The key elements (omitting legislative plumbing) are additions to Title 17, Section 105 (copyright):

> (1) IN GENERAL.—Copyright protection under this title is not available for any work produced pursuant to scientific research substantially funded by the Federal Government to the extent provided in the funding agreement entered into by the relevant Federal agency pursuant to paragraph (2) [Which requires a provision in funding agreements that states that copyright protection is not available for work pursuant to the research]

> Sec. 4. Sense of Congress: It is the sense of the Congress that any Federal department or agency that enters into funding agreements…should make every effort to develop and support mechanisms for making the published results of the research conducted pursuant to the agreements freely and easily available to the scientific community, the private sector, physicians, and the public.

That's about all there is to the act itself. The skeptic in me immediately notices two things:

- ➢ "Substantially" isn't defined—and, given that CIPA basically says "if the Feds help support one computer out of a hundred, all hundred must be filtered," that makes me nervous.
- ➢ Copyright and access are two different issues. STM journals may demand that copyrights be turned over to them; most magazine and book publishers (for example) make no such demands. Eliminating copyright does not provide access; it merely removes one barrier to such access. The final clause may attempt to deal with that, but absent funding provisions and actual plans, it's a feel-good statement.

Early Reactions and Comments

Journal of Cell Biology
Michael J. Held, editor of *The Journal of Cell Biology*, called the bill "a thinly veiled attempt by Harold Varmus and the other founders of the Public Library of Science (PLoS) to eventually force all publishers into their open access publishing model. As this publishing model is unproven and may well be unsustainable, this is an irresponsible act." He seems to assert that Sabo wants to "legislate the demise of the time-honored subscription-based business model," although I'm not sure I see the connection.

The editorial goes on to note the costs of producing an online journal and the services provided by journals. He asserts that nonprofit publishers "are the natural allies of 'open access'" and suggests that PLoS' effort is splitting the scholarly community. I find it hard to argue with Held's assertion that some people are pushing One Big Model of access to the detriment of all others. He notes that Rockefeller University Press, publisher of *The Journal of Cell Biology*, is part of HighWire Press, and that as part of that consortium all RUP journals are freely available online to developing nations—and to *everybody* after a six- or 12-month embargo.

I have two problems with one paragraph in Held's editorial:

> The power to coerce lies with those who pay the bills: the librarians. If librarians can act together they can insist on solutions that are both financially viable for publishers and morally acceptable for consumers. Meanwhile, authors who have work that is valid but of lower impact can vote with their words by publishing in no-frills open access sites such as BioMed Central, rather than in obscure for-profit titles that are bundled in large, expensive packages that libraries feel pressured to buy.

First problem: I'm not convinced that librarians acting in concert as suggested could take place without raising antitrust concerns—and I'm certainly not

convinced that no commercial publisher would think of setting its lawyers on such a case. Second problem, regarding the last sentence: That's quite a sneer you've got there, Michael! In one sentence you manage to dismiss anyone who publishes with BioMed Central as relatively unimportant—"work that is valid but of lower impact."

Jan Velterop of BioMed Central posted a charming letter in response to Held's editorial, noting that Held made the editorial freely available upon publication: "Thank you for making so abundantly clear what the benefit and power is of open access. Not so much by what you say, but definitely by what you do." Velterop notes that open access business models (Velterop uses the plural) "are all about making that possible for any research article that the author feels warrants the widest possible dissemination." He offers a PS for the "kind words about BioMed central, although the impact of the articles we publish is quite a bit higher (judging by the citations to them) than you seem to think, and our techies don't think it's 'no-frills' at all but instead, full of the functionality few others offer."

Senior editors at PLoS also responded to Held's editorial in a longer and less charming manner. The response claims that copyright is *not* used to protect the integrity of scientific literature, but that this protection comes from "rigorous standards of behavior within the scientific community" backed up by laws governing fraud. The letter sees exclusion from copyright as benefiting authors and the scientific community because it would ensure authors don't transfer copyright to a publisher. Noting that Held is also aiming for access to literature, and admitting that the PLoS model is not yet proven, the editors offer this paragraph:

> Where we disagree with Mr. Held is that, in our view, this concerted effort by funding agencies, a diverse group of publishers, librarians, and different governments to provide free and unrestricted access to the biomedical literature is a highly responsible act that reflects the common interests of the public and the scientific research community.

SPARC Open Access Newsletter

Peter Suber devotes much of the first SOAN issue (#63, July 4, 2003) to the Saba bill, or PASA if you prefer. As always with Suber, it's a thoughtful discussion. You should be able to retrieve the newsletter from www.arl.org/sparc/soa/ or mx2.arl.org/Lists/SOA-Newslist.html.

Suber calls PASA "the boldest and most direct legislative proposal ever submitted on behalf of open science." He notes that "substantially" was deliberately not defined. "Hence, one agency could say that

any publication based 25% or more on its grant must be in the public domain, while other agencies could set the threshold at 50% or 75%." Or 5% or 10% or 1%? But Suber is not a cheerleader. Consider the next two paragraphs:

> While PASA would be a giant step forward for open access, it may be bigger than necessary—for open access and for the political realities of Congress. For example, open access to research articles does not require open access to all the products of federally funded research, like software and new physical materials. Moreover, open access to research articles does not require that the articles be in the public domain. It only requires that there be no copyright or licensing restrictions (statutory or contractual barriers) preventing open access. Putting works into the public domain is a simple and effective way to remove these barriers. But consent of the copyright holder is equally effective.

> The Creative Commons has many good examples of licenses that authorize open access and yet stop short of transferring works into the public domain. Since there is no need to jettison copyright in order to achieve open access, there is no reason to lose the votes of those members of Congress who would be unwilling to jettison copyright. Copyright also gives authors the legal basis to block the distribution of mangled or misattributed copies of their work, although in the real academic world authors rarely need copyright to preserve the integrity of their work.

Suber suggests that it's plausible to *allow* government work to be copyrighted, so long as it's done with open access provisions (the Creative Commons "By" license would probably suffice). He recognizes that a "host of objections to PASA could be neutralized by a different approach—and some of those objections have already surfaced."

"Sabo's office has made clear that PASA is a conversation starter." I suppose it's a Congressional habit to *begin* a conversation by entering a radical bill into the hopper, but it gives me the willies: I'll never have the nerves be a Beltway Bandit.

Suber offers four suggestions toward advancing that conversation. Briefly, he proposes:

➢ Recognizing that copyright-plus-consent is all you really need
➢ Limiting the scope to peer-reviewed research articles and preprints (excluding software, etc.)
➢ Noting that entering work into the public domain does not provide open access, it only clears legal blocks, and that PASA could require *actual* open access—that is, submitting research to open-access journals or depositing it in open-access archives

> ➤ Requiring Federal research grants to cover the fees charged by open-access journals.

Those suggestions would, I believe, change PASA from a radical proposal with no clear immediate benefit to a real-world proposal with real-world benefits. And would have avoided polarizing many could-be supporters by putting forth a needlessly extreme measure.

InfoToday NewsBreaks

Miriam A. Drake posted "Free public access to science—will it happen?" on July 7. (www.infotoday.com/newsbreaks/) She links the Sabo bill to PLoS' new public awareness campaign (noted later) and quotes two PLoS founders, Harold Varmus and Michael Eisen. Drake also quotes Derk Haank, former chair of Elsevier Science, in a 2002 interview where Haank essentially dismisses any need for scientific information outside institutes. As far as Haank's concerned, the general public neither wants nor needs what Elsevier publishes, and "you don't do [research] as a self-proclaimed intellectual in your garden shed." Drake comments:

> But, the parents who need information about their child's disease or the woman who wants the latest research results on breast cancer may not be part of an institute. They may not have access to a research library that subscribes to thousands of STM titles.

I would add (although Drake does not) that we may not yet be at the level of scientific perfection where it's reasonable to dismiss any researchers not affiliated with appropriate institutions. There are almost certainly "self-proclaimed" intellectuals in various equivalents of garden sheds who do important work.

Drake also notes, "The bill is not likely to pass both houses of Congress." No copyright-related bill is likely to pass this year. Drake's first-rate discussion ends as follows:

> History reveals that easy access to information makes a difference. Open and free access to basic knowledge results in the creation of useful knowledge that contributes to international health and wealth. New models of communication will require collaboration among universities, publishers, professional societies, and government. While Congress is not likely to see the value of open access and sharing, many feel that the concept will succeed because the time is right.

But does the concept require that work be in the public domain, and does public access require or benefit from a monolithic solution? That's considerably less clear.

The Scientist

A July 16 story by Catherine Zandonella pulls together a range of reactions to the Sabo bill.

(www.biomedcentral.com/news/20030716/04) Jerome H. Reichman of Duke calls it "a well intentioned but perhaps overly simple solution to a very complex problem," noting that forcing research into the public domain might further erode scientists' control over their publications.

Margaret Reich of the American Psychological Society pushes this concept: "The Sabo bill would weaken the right of scientists to be cited for their own work." Technically, that's true: Once work is in the public domain, anyone can do *anything* with it—including republish it as their own work under their own name. It's unethical but not illegal.

Ann Okerson of Yale, an established expert on serial publishing and its costs, notes that articles written by federal employees (*already* in the public domain in the U.S.) don't cost less to access than those written by University researchers. "What Sabo misses is any discussion of just how to develop the business models that would make research available for free."

Allan Adler of the AAP takes a somewhat extreme stance, claiming the bill could be interpreted to apply to *secondary* descriptions of research in popular science books or documentaries. As David Carlson of the U.S. Copyright Office notes, that's unlikely: Copyright protects expression, not facts. Other (unnamed) publishers appear to claim that lack of copyright "could destroy the incentive to produce works that bring science to the public"—a bizarre claim since scientists almost never earn royalties from scientific articles. As David Post of Temple notes, "Scientists are not making money off copyright."

Association of American Universities

A July 18 letter from the AAU's president to Martin Sabo opposes the bill. Reasons given include a claim that copyright protection is important to assure "the accuracy and authenticity of publication" and to maintain "other critical aspects of the publishing process" such as compilation and archiving—although, as far as I can see, most work on archiving does *not* come from those who control copyrights.

The AAU letter cites the possibility that the bill would preclude copyright for computer software—which "would diminish the demonstrably effective incentives for universities and industry to collaborate in technology transfer." Universities couldn't profit as much by licensing and selling research by-products, a profit made easier by the Bayh-Dole act.

The longest paragraph in the letter calls for a "thorough, objective" study of scientific publishing practices, and throws so many irons into this fire that it would virtually assure a study that would last

for years and (I suspect) produce no useful results. The key sentence clocks in at an even 100 words; I won't quote it here.

More from PLoS

The Public Library of Science itself, now a month away from its first publication, is doing something a little unusual for an STM publisher. It's created a 30-second video, "Wings," available at www.plos.org/video.html and aired in San Francisco, Washington, DC and Boston. The video "humorously provides a glimpse to the scientific progress that could be made if research and discoveries were openly and freely shared." The PLoS announcement of the video makes it clear that PLoS is indeed the source of the Sabo bill.

If video spots on *The Simpsons* and Comedy Central's *The Daily Show* aren't unusual enough for a serious advance in scholarly communication, PLoS is also staging a songwriting competition to create a PLoS anthem. (That announcement, even more than the video announcement, suggests that PLoS *really* needs a good editor with an English or journalism background—but never mind.)

I swear, I'm not making these things up. The first announcement came through the FOS forum; the second, after it had changed to SOAF (see below). I'm fairly sure Peter Suber just passed them along; he's not that much of a prankster.

Unfortunately, the Sabo bill, the video spots, and the PLoS anthem seem to follow in the wake of the famous PLoS bluff (er, petition): They suggest an organization far too concerned with theatrics, where the kind of substance evidenced by (for example) BioMed Central's 90 open-access journals might be more useful. Those theatrics have a tendency to backfire. The PLoS petition demonstrated that most scientists have no intention of abandoning their preferred STM journal outlets, no matter how many petitions they sign; the Sabo bill tends to polarize parties who might otherwise be able to agree on methods of improving access. It seems sad.

There may be more reason to be concerned about PLoS. The $1,500 fee is three times the $500 normally estimated for open access publishing. If we use the 28,000-journal estimate for refereed STM journals I've seen in recent articles, and a 100-article-per-journal average, the conversion of all journals to PLoS-style open access would involve annual costs of $4.2 billion (and rising), most of it paid by the foremost research universities and institutions of America and other industrialized nations. I'm not sure how $4.2 billion compares to the total spent on STM subscriptions and access by those universities, but I suspect it's more, not less. Maybe

the money would be coming from different sources—but if PLoS is right about costs, then this model may be *more* expensive than the current environment, outrageous profits and all. Something's wrong here; I'm not sure what.

FOS to SOAF & SOAN

Terminology: ain't it wonderful? Peter Suber did much to promote open access under the name "free online scholarship" through the FOS-Forum list at Topica, the Free Online Scholarship (FOS) Newsletter, and the FOS Weblog. Since Suber began his work, Open Access has become the commonly used term for the desired outcome.

So Peter Suber changed the name of the FOS News weblog to Open Access News. The *FOS Newsletter* had been dormant, but was revived in July 2003 under SPARC's sponsorship and with a new name, the *SPARC Open Access Newsletter* or SOAN. Finally, FOS-Forum became the SPARC Open Access Forum (SOAF). Suber moved all subscribers from the old locations to the new. To subscribe to SOAN or SOAF, visit www.arl.org/sparc/soa/index.html.

Suber himself is leaving his full-time teaching position at Earlham College to become a full-time researcher and writer on behalf of open access, partially supported by SPARC, the Open Society Institute, and Public Knowledge. You'll see references to the OAN weblog, SOAF and SOAN in this and other sections of *Cites & Insights* as appropriate.

OAN is a collaborative weblog. Peter Suber is the editor and selects other contributors, but says he will rarely edit the contributions of others. A July 1 version of "About" for the OAN blog lists 16 contributors and invites others. If you're interested, the direct route is www.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/about-blog.htm, and the document includes detailed notes for contributors.

SOAN #63 (July 4, 2003)

I discuss the second long essay in this issue above, one early response to the Sabo bill. I just summarized the first essay—the set of announcements that create SOAF, SOAN, and the OAN weblog. If it isn't already clear, I **recommend** SOAN—it's worth reading without my interjections and includes a much deeper list of pointers to developments in open access than you'll ever see here. It's monthly, distributed as plain-text email, and you can subscribe by sending any message to SPARC-OAnews-feed@arl.org

The third (and final) essay has a *great* title: "Saving the oodlehood and shebangity of the internet."

It's a serious essay about the "prodigality" of the internet making open access possible—but also making spam easy and cheap and piracy feasible. Steps taken to limit or eliminate spam or piracy could (can already, in some cases) interfere with open access: "We could be collateral damage in the war against piracy and spam."

As Suber notes, many spam filters block *all* mass mailings without regard to their nature; there go emailed newsletters, lists and current-awareness services. And, of course, straightforward discussions of serious topics can trigger spam filters. "Challenge-response" spam blocks don't help much: If *Cites & Insights* was emailed, I certainly wouldn't take the time to respond to email challenges! He suggests that we "Watch the campaign against spam and mass infringement" and try to prevent "remedial overreaching." Points well taken.

SOAN #64 (August 4, 2003)

Just one essay (and a humongous list of highlights and literature citations). It's a good one, related to "The Bethesda Statements" below: "How should we define 'open access'?" Suber begins:

(1) The most important element by far is that open-access literature is available online free of charge. This is the element that catalyzed the open-access movement, and the element that defined "free online scholarship." To this day, it's the only element mentioned when journalists don't have space for a full story.

(2) But price isn't the only barrier to access. Price barriers obstruct the free flow of information, and make it less useful, but so do a dizzying array of licensing restrictions that I have called "permission barriers." Most scientific research is still published behind both price and permission barriers. Open-access archives and journals bypass them both.

Suber discusses permission barriers at some length. As he notes, they're more difficult to discuss than price barriers, particularly if you're not intimately familiar with the area. But there's more—excerpting the beginning of each additional numbered point:

(3) The major open-access initiatives differ on whether open access includes measures to assure long-term preservation.

(4) Similarly, the major definitions differ on whether depositing a work in an open-access archive or repository is part of the definition.

(5) The newer definitions recognize one further element: an explicit and conspicuous label that an open-access work is open access.

These are all important points if you care about open access, particularly if you think there's more to

it than insisting that everyone stick their papers in their own so-called archives.

Suber argues that preservation should be a separate desideratum; I would *reluctantly* agree.

Suber argues that deposit in an archive isn't needed for works in open access journals. That's connected to the preservation issue, and is reasonable only so long as open access journals last forever. I will state as a near certainty that some open access journals will fail (indeed, quite a few already have; they just weren't called "open access"), and that when they fail their contents may simply disappear. Without archives—whether the LOCKSS variety, where journal contents become part of multiple self-restoring archives, or some other sort *independent* of the journal and with better long-term survival probabilities, access ceases to be open because there's nothing to access.

The final point is important and one where (as Suber notes) Creative Commons may show the way. Make it simple, make it easy to understand and *use* it: A flag on or adjacent to the piece that identifies it as open access and links to a thorough explanation of what that means. "Some rights reserved" isn't enough; the CC "By" license may be. Metadata is good, but as Suber says, you need explicit, eye-readable permissions as well.

After some additional discussion of the virtues of reasonably uniform definitions, Suber goes on to note four major barriers between open access and universal access:

(1) Handicap access barriers: most web sites are not yet as accessible to handicapped users as they should be.

(2) Language barriers: most online literature is in English, or just one language, and machine translation is very weak.

(3) Filtering and censorship barriers: more and more schools, employers, and governments want to limit what you can see.

(4) Connectivity barriers: the digital divide keeps billions of people, including millions of serious scholars, offline.

I'm going to have to rein in my impulses for future *SOAN* issues, noting highlights rather than quoting some of the best stuff. Suber is thinking and writing about these issues so well that quoting "the best stuff" will fill *Cites & Insights*. Better you should read the newsletter.

Another Open Access Newsletter

BioMed Central, which publishes 90+ open access refereed journals, has started its own newsletter,

Open Access now. You'll find it at www.biomedcentral. com/openaccess. The July 14 issue featured an interview with Gerry Rubin, a scientist who is also an open access advocate at Howard Hughes Medical Institute. That institute has an official policy of paying charges for OA publishing, and Rubin makes one of those statements that always gets to me: "I think it's *inevitable* that we switch to Open Access." [Emphasis added.] Setting foobar aside (I mentally replace "inevitable" with "foobar" whenever I see it), the interview is interesting and worth reading.

The July 28 issue notes the PLoS TV campaign—and, editorially, insists that "open access" *requires* immediate deposition in a public online repository. (See Suber's comments above.) It goes on to note that *Physiological Genomics* is trying out the hybrid Prosser model. If the author (or institution) pays $1,500 up front, the article will be freely accessible online from date of publication. If not, the article won't be. The article, which argues that such an agreement isn't Open Access (but is it "open access" without the semi-religious caps?), notes that four Entomological Society of America journals have used this hybrid scheme since 2000, and that more than half of the authors choose to pay the fee. The biggest article in the issue is on public archives, with a focus on PubMed Central.

The Bethesda Statements

The Bethesda Statement on Open Access Publishing was released on June 20 and came from an April 11, 2003 meeting at the Howard Hughes Medical Institute in Chevy Chase, MD. According to *Open Access now,* more than thirty people attended; two dozen signed off on the statement, which begins with a definition of open access publication and adds reports from three working groups. I quote the first in full, with excerpts from the reports.

Definition of Open Access Publications

An Open Access Publication[1] is one that meets the following two conditions:

1. The author(s) and copyright holder(s) grant(s) to all users a free, irrevocable, worldwide, perpetual right of access to, and a license to copy, use, distribute, transmit and display the work publicly and to make and distribute derivative works, in any digital medium for any responsible purpose, subject to proper attribution of authorship[2], as well as the right to make small numbers of printed copies for their personal use.

2. A complete version of the work and all supplemental materials, including a copy of the permission as stated above, in a suitable standard electronic format is deposited immediately upon initial publication in at least one online repository that is supported by an academic institution, scholarly society, government agency, or other well-established organization that seeks to enable open access, unrestricted distribution, interoperability, and long-term archiving (for the biomedical sciences, PubMed Central is such a repository).

Note 1: Open access is a property of individual works, not necessarily journals or publishers.

Note 2: Community standards, rather than copyright law, will continue to provide the mechanism for enforcement of proper attribution and responsible use of the published work, as they do now.

Notes from the Statements

The Institutions and Funding Agencies working group stated some beliefs and offered four recommendations, as follows:

To realize the benefits of [changes made possible by the Internet] requires a corresponding fundamental change in our policies regarding publications by our grantees and faculty:

1. We encourage our faculty/grant recipients to publish their work according to the principles of the open access model, to maximize the access and benefit to scientists, scholars and the public throughout the world.

2. We realize that moving to open and free access, though probably decreasing total costs, may displace some costs to the individual researcher through page charges, or to publishers through decreased revenues, and we pledge to help defray these costs. To this end we agree to help fund the necessary expenses of publication under the open access model of individual papers in peer-reviewed journals (subject to reasonable limits based on market conditions and services provided).

3. We reaffirm the principle that only the intrinsic merit of the work, and not the title of the journal in which a candidate's work is published, will be considered in appointments, promotions, merit awards or grants.

4. We will regard a record of open access publication as evidence of service to the community, in evaluation of applications for faculty appointments, promotions and grants.

The Libraries & Publishers working group offered seven recommendations or proposals in two groups, preceded by a note that called open access "an essential component of scientific publishing in the future," presumably a recognition that it might not sweep everything else away. Here's what was said, noting that the only library signatories were from

the National Library of Medicine and the University of Virginia.

Libraries propose to:

1. Develop and support mechanisms to make the transition to open access publishing and to provide examples of these mechanisms to the community.

2. In our education and outreach activities, give high priority to teaching our users about the benefits of open access publishing and open access journals.

3. List and highlight open access journals in our catalogs and other relevant databases.

Journal publishers propose to:

1. Commit to providing an open access option for any research article published in any of the journals they publish.

2. Declare a specific timetable for transition of journals to open access models.

3. Work with other publishers of open access works and interested parties to develop tools for authors and publishers to facilitate publication of manuscripts in standard electronic formats suitable for archival storage and efficient searching.

4. Ensure that open access models requiring author fees lower barriers to researchers at demonstrated financial disadvantage, particularly those from developing countries.

Finally, the Scientists and Scientific Societies Working Group listed these six recommendations or proposals:

1. We endorse the principles of the open access model.

2. We recognize that publishing is a fundamental part of the research process, and the costs of publishing are a fundamental cost of doing research.

3. Scientific societies agree to affirm their strong support for the open access model and their commitment to ultimately achieve open access for all the works they publish. They will share information on the steps they are taking to achieve open access with the community they serve and with others who might benefit from their experience.

4. Scientists agree to manifest their support for open access by selectively publishing in, reviewing for and editing for open access journals and journals that are effectively making the transition to open access.

5. Scientists agree to advocate changes in promotion and tenure evaluation in order to recognize the community contribution of open access publishing and to recognize the intrinsic merit of individual articles without regard to the titles of the journals in which they appear.

6. Scientists and societies agree that education is an indispensable part of achieving open access, and commit to educate their colleagues, members and the public about the importance of open access and why they support it.

If #4 sounds a bit like the pledge of all those scientists who signed PLoS petitions, and who promptly ignored their pledge, there is a connection—but note that #4 lacks absolutes.

Just as only two libraries were represented at this meeting, it's not clear that more than two or three scientific societies were represented. This was a small group with a strong PLoS and biomedical slant—but maybe that was the way to get things moving.

Early Reaction and Counterreaction

The first reaction I encountered was a letter from Jeff Weber, publisher of two American Welding Society publications, to Peter Suber, forwarded to SOAF. The letter is a little odd in some ways.

Open Access Publishing removes the protection of copyright law from publishing efforts. By offering free and open dissemination of research results, it invites alteration of conclusions, misinterpretation of research methods and scope, and misleading condensation of the original work. Moreover, it eliminates many existing systems for commentary on published works (such as published letter forums), which often are necessary for refinement of conclusions and setting the direction of subsequent research.

Weber also holds that allowing the public to reproduce articles "would surely result in widespread author attribution errors" and that the emphasis on immediate access to research findings would create pressure to speed peer review, "which could make it difficult to distinguish between flawed research and groundbreaking discovery. It would also make plagiarism harder to detect." Weber doesn't buy the idea that research should be judged on its merits rather than by the journal it appears in and claims that, because open access could remove some revenue sources for traditional publishers, it could "result in an end to traditional, formal research publication, and ultimately in less research being conducted."

Stevan Harnad offered a fine and, for Harnad, remarkably concise response to Weber's letter. As Harnad notes, Weber is simply wrong in claiming that open access itself implies loss of copyright protection. Harnad fails to see how open dissemination is more likely to lead to alteration, misinterpretation, or misattribution than any other publication. I don't see that either. He also doesn't see why open access journals couldn't publish letters, although Weber may have a small point on that last: If the

only source of funding is article fees, there's a strong disincentive to publish anything but articles.

As Harnad also notes, open access journals don't alter peer review—and nothing in the Bethesda statements seems to call for speedup of peer review. And, of course, *if* open access publishing still results in name-brand journals, those journals will have as much clout with open access as in the current mode—a Harnad rejoinder that is weakened by point #3 from institutions and point #5 from scientists and societies.

Weber's letter reads an enormous amount into the Bethesda statement, most of which is not there. The Bethesda statement comes from two dozen people, almost all of them in the biomedical community, almost none of them representing libraries, scientific societies, or traditional publishers. It states some useful definitions and proposals, ones that deserve discussion. Wider adoption, possibly with refinement, seems likely—as does reaction of various sorts. I rarely write stuff that's even remotely scholarly, so most of this is not my fight—but I find very little to argue with in the Bethesda statements.

Items and Articles

➢ The *Journal of the Medical Library Association* has changed copyright policy, now asking authors for right of first publication and normal republication, but not for copyright assignment. That's a good step. Notably, *American Libraries* has had similar policies for some time, as do most magazines. Authors who are *paid* for their freelance writing rarely give up copyright.

➢ Oxford University Press is taking a half step toward open access in *Nucleic Acids Research*. A key section of the journal will be author-funded with free access. If that works, the rest of the journal will move toward the open access model over the next four or five years.

➢ BertelsmannSpringer, a major European academic publisher, has been sold to two European equity firms, Candover and Cinven. The two firms own Kluwer Academic Publishers; the combined group would be the second largest academic publisher—still a whole lot smaller than Elsevier Science. Springer (remember Springer-Verlag?) publishes more than 700 journals and magazines and 4,000 new books each year. The new company will be called Springer. Some Europeans clearly don't believe that academic libraries have actually hit the budget wall or that open access will transform the industry any time soon. I'm fairly sure they're at least half-wrong.

➢ There's another new initiative: the Information Access Alliance, supported by AALL, ALA, ACRL, ARL, MLA (Medical, in this case), and SPARC. (ACRL is a division of ALA, not a separate legal entity, but never mind…). The focus of this group appears to be a new standard of antitrust review when examining merger transactions in the (STM) serial publishing industry. The IAA site, www.informationaccess.org, offers several white papers, including one urging that the BertelsmannSpringer merger be blocked.

➢ Two steps forward, one step back: *BMJ* will begin charging for access to online content in January 2005. The case made for this change is falling library subscriptions to the print journal, combined with threats to other revenue sources.

➢ All universities in the United Kingdom are now institutional members of BioMed Central. This JISC-funded initiative (the Joint Information Systems Committee, which funds many UK higher-education information initiatives) means that all UK higher education staff may submit papers to BioMed Central's 90+ open-access journals without author fees. (Unrelated to this: In an email discussion, one professor suggested that articles in BioMed Central journals averaged one download per month; according to Jan Velterop of BioMed Central, the actual figure is 250 per month *from BioMed Central servers*, with more downloads probable from other sources such as PubMedCentral. That's an impressive rate for scholarly articles.)

Romero, Michelle, "Open access and the case for public good: The scientists' perspective," *Online* 27:4 (July/August 2003): 32-3.

This brief article introduces some of the issues in a magazine that hasn't typically covered them. It's written from a European perspective and includes a few statements that strike me as odd. For example: "The stated agenda: How to protect the *shrinking* public domain of information available to researchers…" But the public domain is *not* shrinking; it's just not growing as rapidly as it should. For that matter, most people involved in open access initiatives aren't particularly concerned with whether articles enter the public domain 50 years after a researcher's death as opposed to 70. The point of open access is to have access *now*, while works are still absolutely protected by copyright.

Later, I read that "public funding for research has been shrinking for decades"—which is surely not true in all countries—and that academic partner-

ships with industry collide "with the idea that freely shared information—made available in the public domain instead of privatized by industry—in turn creates new knowledge that helps everyone." Again, however, *none* of this information (in the U.S. at least) was ever in the public domain unless the research was performed directly by an agency of the U.S. government. The problem with access has to do with journal pricing and access policies, not with commercialization—at least as I've seen it discussed elsewhere. An odd brief piece; maybe I don't understand the environment.

Unsworth, John M., "The crisis in scholarly publishing in the humanities," *ARL Bimonthly Report 228* (June 2003). www.arl.org/newsltr/228/crisis.html

Here's a surprise. When I printed off this brief piece, based on remarks presented at the 2003 Annual Meeting of the American Council of Learned Societies, I was ready to tear into it. Unsworth, who is now dean of GSLIS at University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign (one of America's better-known library schools), seems to be advocating the death of the book.

Which is why I set these papers aside and come back to them later. That's not what he's doing at all. He is suggesting that the traditional scholarly monograph—a small subset of "books"—may not be economically viable and that maybe, just maybe, it doesn't matter. I would take issue with some of the internal argumentation, which seems to say that an appropriate response to price-gouging by *journal* publishers is to stop publishing *books*, but I don't know enough to argue that scholarly monographs, particularly those that can't be self-supporting, are a good way to do scholarship. Nor am I sure that they're not; I'm not a scholar, after all.

I do believe that one solution to some of the problems Unsworth is citing is print on demand, and that it's probably premature to write off the monograph. I also believe that "stand-alone, single-author work on smaller problems" continues to be worthwhile, particularly in the humanities, even though Unsworth labels it "quaint."

It's short. I **recommend** you read it yourself and draw your own conclusions. Unsworth is likely to be heard from again within the library community; that seems to happen with library school deans.

Willinsky, John, "Scholarly associations and the economic viability of open access publishing," *Journal of Digital Information* 4:2 (April 9, 2003). jodi.ecs.soton.ac.uk

This is a long, meaty article—23 pages in all, including 16 of primary text and four of substantive endnotes.

Willinsky begins by citing more than 1,000 purely-online peer reviewed journals, of which 10 to 20% may be open access. He argues that scholarly associations are key players in determining the future of open access publishing, as they have "long been at the heart of academic journal publishing." He then does something refreshing and important: Analyzes the current revenue situations of 20 professional associations, based on their tax returns, to consider whether it makes good sense overall for such associations to switch to open access models. "Good sense" means more than just revenue streams, as he points out: "The scholarly association has, then, to put the question to its membership: Is this organization devoted to maintaining its current revenue levels or is it devoted to serving the professional interests of its members in fostering the greater development and circulation of knowledge?"

It's an interesting and complex exploration. I could argue with some of his assumptions and assertions, as would others. For example, is it generally true that "the principal benefit of joining most scholarly associations has been the 'free' or discounted subscription that comes with it"? That's discouraging, if true. He does later note other benefits of belonging to scholarly associations.

His tabular analysis of publication costs and revenue, which excludes membership dues as part of journal revenue streams, concludes that 12 of 20 analyzed societies actually *lose* money on their journals—which is to say that membership dues heavily subsidize the journals. Part of that loss may be due to the commercial outsourcing that so many associations have done.

Recommended. Willinsky raises important issues for societies and offers some facts to back them up, although one could always argue with the facts.

A Good Stuff Perspective
Weblogs and Libraries

This began as the second half of "Weblogging: A Tool, not a Medium," but it got *way* too long—and the only commonality was weblogging. So if this seems a bit more random than the usual perspective, there's a reason. A few short recent pieces related to weblogs struck me as interesting. Most of them aren't long enough to belong in "The Good Stuff" or "The Library Stuff." So, since this issue has one perspective philosophizing about weblogs and media,

I'll note them here. Most (but not all) of this is about weblogs and libraries.

Simpson, George, "Yet another flood gate opens, blogging," *Media Life* July 25, 2003.

George Simpson, "a longtime New York PR man representing various media properties," is *seriously* cranky about the growth of weblogs. He begins by noting that AOL is making it easier for its "34 bizillion or so members" to become webloggers, notes that *professionals* have "long maintained blogs where they exchange ideas and perspectives on developments in their fields and the world at large," and adds notes on a Dallas Morning *News* weblog and other oddities. The kicker with AOL is the ability to post entries to a weblog from instant messaging.

> This assumes that in the middle of sending an instant message you will be struck dumb by such a brilliant thought that it *must* be immediately posted to a weblog for the entire world to share. That most people only have a thought worth sharing with the world, say, three or four times in their entire lives seems to be, at least from AOL's perspective, beside the point.

Interesting that a flack has such a patronizing view of the world at large. "Most people" only have three or four thoughts in their entire lives that are worth sharing. Wow! Clearly, George Simpson isn't "most people"—he's one of that elite with so many shareable thoughts that he writes about them for semiformal media. (I get the sense Simpson believes *early* bloggers were mostly serious professional journalists, which strikes me as rewriting weblog history.)

He notes the likelihood that "early adopters" will be unhappy with the flood of new bloggers—while others "will embrace the notion of 'democratizing the web.'" "For every blogger filing a compelling behind-the-scenes narrative of what it's like to be under American bombardment, there will be ten thousand morons who think because they have a keyboard, they are owed a hearing."

But creating a weblog doesn't mean you believe you're owed a hearing. It means that you're trying to say something. If it's boring, nobody will read it except those craving boredom. Assuming you have some way of knowing your readership's size, you'll figure that out. If you care, you'll either write more interesting entries or stop doing the weblog. If you don't care, what's the harm?

Except, possibly, for a flood of weblogs making interesting new ones hard to discover. I think that's what metablogs—weblogs that discuss new weblogs—are all about. At least it is if metabloggers are selective, not simply noting each new blog no matter how awful it is.

If *Cites & Insights* had 50 readers, I'd either improve it or stop doing it. But I can imagine a focused weblog with a dozen regular readers that serves the needs of its creator and its readers well. Even if the Simpsons of this world don't think that creator has anything to say that's worth sharing.

Block, Marylaine, "Creating your niche on the net," *Ex Libris* 185 (August 1, 2003).

Block says she always tells people "I'm an internet guru by default. I'm not the most knowledgeable, or the most technologically adept internet librarian; I was just one of the first... If you're first, you don't have to be the best possible."

As she notes, sometimes the first is the best (or close to it)—as with Karen Schneider's Internet Filter Assessment Project in 1997 and Gary Price's pursuit of the Invisible Web.

She offers other examples—Charles W. Bailey, Jr. on scholarly electronic publishing, Bernie Sloan on digital reference research, Rory Litwin and Jessamyn West on progressive librarianship. "The moral is, get in on the ground floor." I could argue some specifics—cases where the first person to publish has not become the "guru" of a field in most people's minds—but she makes a good point.

The rest of the column suggests that *libraries* should consider filling internet niches. I think it's an interesting idea. Rather than comment on whether I agree or disagree (or why you should care), I'll just **recommend** that you go read the essay.

Steven M. Cohen posted a commentary on Block's piece at *Library Stuff* later that day. He noted that it reflected his own reasons for (and experience with) weblogging, and urged others to do likewise—jump into weblogging. Steven Bell posted a long and thoughtful comment the next day, quoting the title of my new book as a key response: Before you blog, you should first have something to say. Bell was bothered by the advice that readers jump on the bandwagon when many existing library blogs are pointless and poorly done, particularly those that seem to chronicle "my day on the job" in excruciating detail. Bell noted that developing expertise requires dedication, thoughtfulness, research, risk-taking and hard work.

Cohen thought about Bell's comment and came across a Dave Winer quote:

> Bloggers who never flame anyone and don't have blogrolls (or don't make a big deal about them) may take a long time to become "important"—but if they stand out because of the quality of their ideas, and the ideas they inspire, they can attain a kind of longevity that has value...

Cohen used that as part of a long commentary on Bell's comment, refining what Cohen was originally trying to say. Cohen believes that librarians who write weblogs (and want to be noticed) are doing themselves a favor, and that blogging "can be a 'path to gurudom' if done well and purposeful." He also suggests that you do a weblog because you have things you want to say, and it's an easy way to say them. If it makes you famous, that's a bonus. And he repeated his wish that "all librarians had blogs."

Bell commented on the new entry, noting that he's all for people creating weblogs when they do have something to say and that blogs can be a great way for budding writers to develop their skills. Bell hopes librarians will start blogs to share ideas, not for idle patter, to get noticed or to engage in shameless self-promotion—and at this point, it appears that Bell and Cohen are *almost* in agreement. "Almost" because Bell closes by noting that "Everyone might have something to say, but not everyone who is saying something should be doing it in a publicly available forum. Yes, a very few might achieve fame, but I think the market will decide that the majority will be subject to well-deserved anonymity."

I jumped in at that point, agreeing with both of them—and noting that the majority of library weblogs I've sampled (but not bookmarked) have fallen into Bell's final category. To quote my comment at *Library Stuff*:

> I do believe there's a problem of having so many weblogs out there that they all become a grey mass, and that the two directories I know of (Peter Scott's and the Open Directory) [can] become useless through sheer mass. But weblogs can be a way to hone your writing skills and, maybe, develop a specialized audience. Not the only way, and for some of us not the best way—where reflection matters more than speed, I still question whether a weblog is the preferred medium.

Bell added another point: Not only are there so many blogs it's hard to distinguish them, but quite a few seem to provide the same information as they all try to add new content every day. "From my perspective that's what makes the blog a weaker communication outlet. I can see it being a great way to get one's thoughts out in the form of a personal journal. But with respect to helping your colleagues keep up and think more deeply about the topics of the day, I think it is the very rare person who can keep coming up with worthy thoughts and observations on a daily basis." He noted *LISNews* as an exception but also as a team effort and says that I "come close but even [Walt] might fear to tread where bloggers go—preferring instead to save up his good stuff for us to read once a month."

I added a quick response: It's not so much that I save up the good stuff as that "I wanly hope that there will be a little more reflection and synthesis in *C&I* than there would be in a weblog. My style. Others have their own styles."

Thinking about it more, I have a qualm about one of the claimed virtues of weblogging, one I explicitly repeated: Honing your writing skills. Sure, any writing tends to improve your writing skills and weblogs require writing. But to *really* hone your writing skills, I believe you need critical reaction. That's what good English teachers provide—or, in the adult world, referees, editors, and (if you're lucky) blunt colleagues. (Unfortunately, it gets tougher to find critical editors after you do this stuff for a while!)

It strikes me as much less likely that you'll receive critical feedback on your blogging *as writing*. I suspect most of us place blogging somewhere between email and "real" writing. I don't expect the polish in weblog entries that I do in formal articles. I'm mean enough to post a comment on a particularly amusing spelling error in a weblog, but it would never occur to me to comment on an infelicitous phrase, run-on sentence, or grammatical error. To that extent, weblogs are an iffy way to hone writing.

A few days after all this back-and-forth, David Bigwood offered his thoughts on blogging in *Catalogablog* (www.catalogablog.blogspot.com), one of the best topical library weblogs around. After noting that librarians have taken to blogging in a big way, and the emergence of *LIS Blogsource* (a metablog on library weblogs), he comments:

> I feel we have enough good general library 'blogs; LISNews and Library Stuff come to mind. We also have plenty of 'blogs where daily activities and incidents are described. These "diary of a librarian" sites can be interesting, if well written… 'Blogs by a local library can be an important method of communication to the patrons and there can not be too many of those but I'll only read the ones from the libraries I use.

> What I'd like to see more of are topical 'blogs devoted to a professional topic. How about a site for information about acquisitions of medical journals or children's materials? How about IM reference or WiFi in the library? The number of topics is only limited by the areas of professional responsibility we move in.

> There are many reasons to start a 'blog: Improving writing skills, keeping in touch with friends and family, or exploring the medium, for example. While all valid reasons, I'd like to see more people consider writing that could be useful to the profession. You don't have to be the best or most respected in the area. I'd not consider myself the greatest cataloger or

most knowledgeable in the field. I only try to keep up with the news and pass it on. Catalogablog has found readers and received some nice compliments. You could do the same in an area of interest to you.

Although Bigwood doesn't refer directly back to Marylaine's essay, he's expanding on the first part of it. I know who *should* be doing a WiFi weblog, but maybe it doesn't suit Bill's style. I check a few topical weblogs that are slightly outside my own areas of interest—such as *Catalogablog*—because they manage to make those areas interesting. There's loads of room for more topical library weblogs. and they can work even without daily updates.

Schwartz, Greg, "Blogs for Libraries," Webjunction, August 3, 2003. (webjunction.org)

This article (by the author of the *Open Stacks* weblog) offers a quick, clear explanation of what a blog is and why librarians should care. He considers *Shifted Librarian* to be the most renowned weblog and notes *LISnews* as a prime example of collaborative blogging. He touts weblogs as "an excellent way to stay current" and offers six possible reasons for a librarian to start a weblog, each with a paragraph of expansion omitted here:

1. Writing a blog keeps you current.

2. Blogs are an advocacy tool.

3. Blogs build community.

4. You are unique.

5. Do it for you.

6. Lastly, it's easy, so no excuses.

He also suggests why *libraries* should care about weblogs. (Local information, library news and advocacy, announcements of acquisitions and services.) While he seems as convinced as *Shifted* that blogs are perfect for those purposes, I'm not so sure—at least based on the library weblogs I've visited. In several cases, it's struck me that a little more effort and more traditional form would result in web sources that served the *users* of the library better (excepting, of course, those users sufficiently fascinated to check the liblog every day!)—which, in turn, would strengthen the library. Ease of use is a big selling point for weblogs, but it may lead to using this particular screwdriver in places where a socket wrench would work better.

Schwartz' article also discusses syndication (RSS) and suggests a bright, limitless future for library and librarian blogging. He lists a bunch of notable weblogs, tools, and resources. I find that all of his *librarian* weblog examples were already in my daily checklist—and that none of his *library* weblogs

are there (although one used to be). I'm not sure what that means.

The indefatigable Cohen picked up on Schwartz' article, calling it a "dynamite article" in a same-day *Library Stuff* post. I agree with Cohen's final comment, "Great job, Greg." Even as I'm poking at the Schwartz piece, I **recommend** it as a fine brief explanation well suited to librarians. Interesting: Cohen picked up on (and expanded) Schwartz' comment, which I'd overlooked, that "blogs are only one tool in the well-informed librarian's tool chest." There are indeed, and Steven Bell has done fine work on suggesting ways to build that tool chest.

The One that Got Away

The original title for this perspective was "The politics of weblogs." It ended with a one-page essay on "The politics of prominence," based on an unfortunate recent incident in the blogosphere.

In the end, there wasn't room for that essay—and I could never get my commentary in a form that would serve you and didn't upset me. So why include this non-item?

Because, despite my comments in the other weblogging Perspective, I *do* believe there's one rule that every blogger should follow, at least if the weblog involves comments by or about anyone other than the blogger.

You know the rule: It's found in nearly every philosophy throughout history. Something about treating other people as you'd like them to treat you.

Unfortunately, the more I thought about this incident, the more I believe that—for some Very Important People—there's an escape clause related to the definition of people (worth treating as people.)

And I don't want to write about that.

The Details

URL: cites.boisestate.edu/civ3i11.pdf