Cites & Insights
Crawford at Large

The Library Stuff

Beaven, James, "Digital dissertations," *American Libraries* 35:7 (August 2004): 46-47.

A growing number of universities *require* that theses and dissertations be submitted in electronic form, presumably to encourage students to add digital features mere print can't replicate. That's great, but this article goes on to the next question: How do we assure long-term access to those dissertations? Beaven offers a number of models—and for those dissertations that can be wholly or approximately replicated in paper form, suggests low-tech solutions. That is, archival paper backup combined with microfilm backup—combined with a redundant digital backup system that may be able to keep up with new technology. I'm surprised by one statement, but I'm not a preservationist: "Rag-quality paper does have a life expectancy of several hundred years under good conditions. However, microfilm is still the standard for preservation and has a longer life expectancy." Really? Microfilm is certainly more compact, and I'll accept that preservations experts may *project* that microfilm will survive longer than the half-millennium *proven* for rag paper—but no microfilm or film of any sort has been proven to last even two centuries so far. That's a minor cavil; this is an interesting treatment of a difficult subject.

Bell, Steven J., "What works for me: 10 tips for getting published," *Ex Libris* 225 and 226.

"Given the number of articles getting published annually in an ever-growing body of professional library journals, it seems that every librarian has contributed at least once, and some many more times, to the literature of librarianship." Fortunately, that's not true; unfortunately, some library people may *want* to publish and find it difficult to do so.

Bell writes well and publishes in a wide range of journals, some higher-profile than I've ever attempted. He served as a guest speaker in a library writing workshop and based this two-part article on his remarks. Briefly—and without the **recommended** commentary that makes sense of them—here are the ten tips: Write everyday, establish a dedicated time and place for writing, "writing that primes the pump," generating good ideas, "listen to what librarians are grousing about," finding a mentor, "try a co-authoring relationship," "try a conference presentation first," where to publish, and "as you travel the road to submission."

Most of these tips are complementary to my longer writing-related notes, *First Have Something to Say* (which Bell refers to in tip four). I disagree mildly with the first tip, but only for experienced writers; until you *do* get a feel for it, daily writing may be essential.

Along those lines, you might also print off "Rhetorical comments" by Diane Sandford from LLRX.com, published July 26, 2004. Sandford offers "some of the rules of rhetoric that live in my brain," such as "write honestly," "avoid affectations and fancy words," and "think." To quote much more would detract from this brief piece.

Inside This Issue

Block, Marylaine, "The right hand knoweth not...," *Ex Libris* 228.

Block's concerned about the "interesting dichotomy between our profession's theory and practice regarding recruitment." On one hand journals and organizations are trying to recruit the next generation of librarians "before we all retire en masse in the next ten years"; on the other hand, "library administrators and coworkers are treating newly minted young librarians badly"—or at least that's how young librarians report it.

As a pseudo-librarian, I have slightly mixed feelings about this. Were newbies somehow treated better a generation ago—welcomed into offices, treated as being as knowledgeable as the old hands, helped

up the career ladder and all that? One complaint is that older staff resent having "NextGens" thrust into supervisory roles over them—and is this either a new or a surprising complaint, particularly if the older staff include capable but non-aggressive people who (perhaps correctly) feel they've been shafted? I also have my doubts about that promised mass retirement in the next decade being quite as massive as everyone thinks. I can tell you that the *AARP Magazine* and AARP's own surveys indicate that many of today's over-50 population have no intention of going peacefully into full-time retirement. Many can't afford it; more, I suspect, don't want it.

Yes, the workplace should be "open and affirming" for new entrants. Yes, many libraries don't do as much to encourage and reward professional development as they should. Yes, we need the energy and enthusiasm of the younger generation—although it would be nice if the younger generation recognized that they're not the only ones with good ideas and the energy to carry them out.

Maybe younger librarians do "bring a whole different knowledge base to the table," Block's focus for most of this column. I hope that's true. I certainly agree that older librarians should be open to the ideas of new librarians and should offer good feedback and rewards for professionalism. "Of course [new librarians] should be respectful and willing to learn from older librarians." It does cut both ways, and some of the "NextGen" writing I've seen seems to lack that bidirectionality.

Buschman, John, "Staying public: The real crisis in librarianship," *American Libraries* 35:7 (August 2004): 40-42.

This excerpt from Buschman's recent book, *Dismantling the Public Sphere: Situating and Sustaining Librarianship in the Age of the New Public Philosophy*, argues that it's dangerous to view academic and public libraries in economic rather than democratic terms. I'm inclined to agree, one of several reasons that I won't use "customers" to refer to library users. Viewing libraries in pure economic terms is part of an overall tendency toward seeing everything in market terms. We're each supposed to be "our own brand"—a sad commentary on the worth of the individual. Buschman points out that business-based models for public institutions assume that performance can be measured objectively—but some activities are commonly funded *because* they're hard to measure. He asserts, "We are a society out of balance—tilted too much toward business and market solutions and too far from the ideals of a true public and a democratic society."

Do I agree with all of Buschman's article and philosophy? I'm not sure. I *am* sure that his commentary is **worth reading and thinking about**, and that the pure marketplace view of libraries tends to cheapen and damage them.

Entlich, Richard, "FAQ: Blog today, gone tomorrow? Preservation of weblogs," *RLG DigiNews* 8:4 (August 15, 2004)

Here's the question: "Weblogs seem to be growing in number and stature, but a lot of them seem pretty ephemeral. Are any special efforts being made to preserve their contents?" Entlich offers definitions and numbers on weblogs or blogs then goes on to address the question. As usual for these FAQs, the answer is detailed, readable, and informative.

He discusses some of the reasons that blogs tend to be ephemeral—for example, oneshot blogs, waning enthusiasm, blogger burnout, and loss or disruption in hosting services. A followup question might be, "Who cares?" Most librarians give little thought to preservation of true ephemera, the extremes of gray literature; why should blogs be preserved? Entlich offers some worthwhile answers.

"How hard are blogs to archive?" Fairly tough. Not only do typical web problems apply—copyright, dynamic content, exotic file formats, etc.—but features that appear to be integral parts of blogs may actually be on entirely different servers, making coherent archiving more difficult. (Comments, for example, aren't always integral parts of blogs.) Link rot may affect blogs more than more formal websites.

At this point, the Internet Archive may be the only ongoing attempt to archive blogs as part of its overall web snapshots. Entlich concludes that there *is* a case for selective archiving of blogs, that targeted collection of blogs doesn't seem to be getting much attention yet, and that "there is a growing need to develop a strategy to save at least a few [weblogs] for posterity." Well worth reading. The same issue has a Cliff Lynch interview that touches on weblogs.

Hennen, Thomas J., Jr., "Restore our destiny: Full—not plural—funding," *American Libraries* 35:7 (August 2004): 43-45.

Hennen takes on Coffman—well, it's not that simple, but I'm delighted to see someone with Hennen's credibility argue against Steve Coffman's latest anti-public-library concept, his "plural funding" idea. Make public libraries like public radio: Sounds intriguing until you examine it a little further. Hennen doesn't just explain why Coffman's idea is such an awful one, he proposes some appropriate activities—focusing on the library's mission and goals, communicating the library's value, establishing model library district laws, establishing model impact-fee laws, and—a difficult one—establish national standards for public libraries. The overall

concept, which I thoroughly agree with, is that we should lobby for public libraries as a tax-supported public good, not make them as elitist and "have-oriented" as most of NPR. (Full disclosure: I do contribute to my local PBS radio station because I listen to *Marketplace* and, sometimes, *Car Talk*.)

Pace, Andrew K., "E-books: Round two," *American Libraries* 35:8 (September 2004): 74-5.

Pace was one of those who truly believed ebooks were going to take off—as he admits in this "Technically speaking" column. He says, "Many libraries are still feeling the sting of their first encounter with e-books" while others "still plod along with e-books, persuaded by download statistics and patrons lured to the library by electronic content." The biggest difference in "round two" follows that statement: "the 'r' is completely gone from the front of this slow but steady 'evolution' of electronic books."

> Can anything save the e-book? Certainly. And help is on the way in the form of better content, better technology, and the realization that e-books will not replace the printed book but will most certianly satisfy readers in a fashion that no longer smacks of technological novelty or fad.

After a few more words on some reasons that the e-book "revolution" failed so miserably, Pace discusses the Ebook Library from Ebooks Corporation (which seems to solve some of the problems with downloadable ebooks and library contracts), Overdrive (another public library downloadable-circulation operation using self-expiring PDF), ebrary (a database that's mostly ebook titles)—and two ebook-reader technologies that, sigh, Pace promises "will revolutionize offline reading." One, E Ink's "electronic ink technology," is in Sony's Japan-only LIBRIe e-Book reader, along with typically draconian DRM. The other is Kent Displays' cholesteric LCD display, which still isn't in any consumer readers. Finally, Pace talks about the BookMachine from the On Demand Machine Corporation as something that "just might be the savior of the e-book format."

On the positive side, this is a reasonable quick overview of recent developments the kinds of downloadable e-book systems that libraries can use and that make sense for some applications. I would say it's also a positive sign that Pace thinks of evolution and of ebooks and print books being complementary—but his "revolutionize" comment makes me wonder.

On the negative side, two points give me pause. Pace says that the LIBRIe's resolution of 170 dots per inch is "more than twice the normal web display," which is either wrong or mysterious. Most 17" displays operate at 1280x1024, which is roughly 96

pixels per inch; most notebook displays—the more direct competitors to dedicated readers—run anywhere from 96 to 150 pixels per inch.

The other is that last section, which is consistent with the ongoing efforts of ebook advocates to pad the sales figures for ebooks. The BookMachine can't be the "savior of the e-book format" for a simple reason: It has *nothing* to do with ebooks. It's a print-on-demand system. PoD is a great development, but it *strengthens* print books. A stack of paper sheets with ink or toner on them bound into a heavier cover is called a book. Not an ebook: A book.

Bibs & Blather
Advocacy?

As some of you know, I have a journal at *LISNews*—sort of a weblog lite. A recent post in that journal concerned a stupid mistake I made—attempting to comment on something in a blog I should never have even been visiting. (I checked on that site again; the discussion proceeded nicely enough, sometimes about me, but without my participation. I'll leave it that way. I managed to wipe my shoes clean and don't wish to step in that again.)

Comments—from one person—on that journal post seemed to take me to task for not being simplistic enough (I'm paraphrasing, and if this isn't what the poster really meant, that's OK: I'm not naming the person anyway.) A later point was that you can be nuanced in intellectual discussion, but if you want change, you have to be an advocate, and to advocate, you have to [**my words**] "dumb it down" and eliminate nuance.

While I disagree with that assertion—I'm trying to talk to reasonably intelligent adults, and I really hate it when people dumb things down for my consumption (since it always means, directly or indirectly, talking down to me), so I'm sure not about to insult other people by assuming they can't handle nuanced treatments (or semi-Proustian sentences like this one)—I finally realized that it involves a conclusion not in evidence.

Namely, that I'm particularly interested in advocacy. I don't think I am. To the extent that I wind up advocating certain positions, it's because I find them more coherent and more in line with my overall worldview than alternatives. To the extent that I argue against other positions, it's because I find them incoherent, inhumane, or sharply at odds with my underlying beliefs.

My columns in various magazines have generally been intended to describe, educate and sometimes synthesize. I don't believe I've been trying to persuade, except to the extent that "If you believe in X,

then maybe you ought to consider Y" could be considered persuasion.

Cites & Insights started out primarily as a way to note articles worth reading and developments in technology worth paying attention to. It's become much more than that (and in some ways less, as I don't cover PC-related stuff all that much) through a process of natural growth and continued analysis and synthesis.

Maybe my failure to act as an advocate is a problem—but I'm not sure it's my problem.

I am sure that the thought of hardening my positions on library-related issues and simplifying my arguments so that I can be more convincing does not appeal to me. If that means I'm less effective as a change agent, so be it: That was never my career goal. Even my first book was not an effort to get people to use MARC; it was an effort to make MARC understandable and explain its background.

There's no shortage of advocates in the library field. There's also no shortage of people who reduce arguments to yes/no, white/black contrasts. The two groups form a Venn diagram of overlapping but non-identical circles. I hope I don't fit in either circle.

Speaking of Copyright

Last issue's Bibs & Blather noted that readership figures seemed to suggest "you" are a lot more interested in scholarly access than in copyright. I threatened—er, promised—to do an essay on why the copyright coverage matters and, perhaps, the "four-fold nature" of copyright aspects covered in *Cites & Insights.* The latter may yet happen (but not this time), and it's possible that I'll split copyright coverage into more manageable chunks. But I spoke too soon about readership, I guess.

File-download figures for 2004 through September 30 surprised me. The "discursive glossary" (4:2) continues to have the most unique downloads for 2004 (the CIPA Special is by far the most downloaded overall), followed by March 2004 (4:4), a varied issue with access and censorware essays along with book perspectives and other stuff: That's the same as previous figures, covering January 1 through July 31.

But the third largest number of unique downloads is last month's issue, more than half of which is copyright-related—and that's after only 17 days, so I can expect a few hundred additional downloads over time. Maybe "wikipedias and worth" or my offtopic perspective drew huge numbers of readers, or maybe "you" do care about copyright. (The other 2004 issues with sharply higher-than-average unique downloads are 4:1, with both copyright and access essays, and 4:7, a strong access

edition; 4:10 *may* also be high, but most readership was at its temporary home, so I can't be sure.)

Conclusion? Your preferences are unpredictable.

<u>Perspective</u>
RSS and Multimodes Revisited

Let's not get into the expansion of "RSS" or why anyone should care. We may be past the days when "RSS bigots" were proclaiming that if something wasn't available in an RSS feed, it didn't exist as far as they were concerned. Back when certain younger library movers and shakers were making such pronouncements, I varied between disbelief and sadness. Disbelief: I did not believe that those people *really* get all their information via RSS feeds. Sadness: To limit yourself to any one technique, and to insist that others produce their output in a way that suits your preferences, is self-destructive arrogance. It's sad to see anyone limit their own vista on the world by such narrow-mindedness.

Back then, I didn't use RSS—which is to say, I didn't have an aggregator. Why not? Well, I couldn't see adding yet another piece of software; I had a short list of bookmarked weblogs and similar sites that I checked daily, with a somewhat longer list checked less frequently; and I cared about context.

Jessamyn West, the rarin' librarian of librarian.net, had been slow on the RSS uptake as well—a different case, since West was one of the first librarians to start a weblog. On January 28, she posted a commentary on her experiences in finally trying an RSS aggregator. Ignoring what's probably the more important part of that post (where she talks about using RSS to serve public library patrons, particularly ones needing special assistance), I'll quote some of the key paragraph:

> So I've been messing around with my RSS aggregator for the better part of a day now and I have this to say: I enjoy reading sites in the aggregator whose only [or main] function is to provide content. In fact, in some instances reading blogs this way allows me to avoid some very busy pages and just read all their content as black on white text with nice blue links. This is great for news sites, pretty good for most blogs, and downright disturbing for more arty sites where the design is really part of the content, or accentuates the content in some important way…

I sent Jessamyn appreciative email, the more pointed since I started trying out Bloglines in January—after all, it's just another website, so there was no software and I could synchronize sites between home and work. My comment at the time was, "I'm still trying to decide how I feel about it. (Already, I con-

clude that it doesn't work well for context-heavy weblogs such as yours, mamamusings, LISNews)."

She responded with a note that she figured she was becoming a dinosaur not knowing anything about it (I know that feeling!)—and that it was great for "ugly sites or sites without too much back and forth." On the other hand, "and this is a big other hand…it removes the rest of the site from the context of the news." You don't see the number of comments; you don't see sidebars; you don't see much of anything except the new stories. "I like to think of my site as more than a blog and I worry that people who learn about it and experience it only through an aggregator will miss out on some of the special stuff I have to offer…" West also gets tired of "new gadget" zealotry (I may not share her politics, but we have a *lot* in common).

My response to that—correct *at the time*: "For me, Bloglines is ideal for low-volume weblogs and those I'm not sure I care about…and, as you say, really ugly ones. Otherwise, I'm already starting to pull stuff back out of the feeds and into my Favorites list. Unfortunately, one weblog that I find interesting but is remarkably ugly, black on dark grey, is also highly unlikely to have an RSS feed, since it's entirely hand-crafted HTML, I believe. … I find that I'm worrying less and less about looking like a dinosaur as time goes on. It helps that some of the great technophiles out there (Cory Doctorow but also others) are commenting on the growing irrelevance of the toys themselves." I added as a footnote that I was still contemplating a blog for the stuff that doesn't fit in *C&I,* but finding that contemplation less interesting as time goes on.

A few days later, there was a three-way conversation involving the Two Stevens and yours truly. I looked at Cohen's PowerPoint presentation on RSS, noted that there was a slide about negative aspects, and noted that Jessamyn and I—"who are very different types in general"—seemed to be reaching similar conclusions about the usefulness of aggregators *for us*: neither to shun them nor to make them all encompassing. I wondered why that was. Cohen responded: "It's because you both look at web pages in the same way. You see web pages as not just content. I only see web pages as pure content. At least, that's how I **want** to view web pages as they relate to RSS." Steven Bell popped in with a note about a *Chronicle of Higher Education* article citing an RSS expert who was, typically, badly informed as to how libraries work. I added another comment: "Your perception is interesting—and could be cited as a reason not to use RSS, at least some of the time: Some of us really, truly feel that you lose a lot in treating all web pages as pure content."

The Reality

I'll stand by that statement—but I should also tell the truth. I now monitor *librarian.net* via Bloglines, just as I do *Library Stuff* and 89 other sites (almost all of them weblogs). Admittedly, two of those are special cases: My recently-installed *C&I Alerts* weblog that really exists *only* so people can use the Atom/RSS feed to be notified of new issues, and— because of an interesting Bloglines feature—my own "blog lite," my journal at *LISNews*. That feature: When you click on a feed, you see how many Bloglines subscribers subscribe, which is a rough measure of your popularity in the "blogosphere."

I do feel the loss of context in some cases. That's true for *librarian.net*. It's probably true for a number of other weblogs. I get some context back because I'll click through to the native weblog for stories that might have comments or stories that don't show up with full text, but I probably miss a lot. In a number of cases, I also miss the horror of trying to read white text on a black background or small type on some over-designed page.

I don't use Bloglines for everything and don't intend to. Yes, I've moved most of those weblogs back from Favorites to Bloglines and added quite a few more. But I still deal with *LISNews* and its journals on their own merits; I still check *mamamusings* directly; I don't use RSS for news or much of anything outside weblogs (my primary news source is still dropped on the driveway around 4:30 a.m. every morning, and I plan to keep it that way).

I use Bloglines for three reasons:

➢ It spares me the horrors of overdesigned weblogs.

➢ It is a lot more efficient—yes, Steven C., you're right on that one. The daily blog crawl that used to take 45 minutes for 20-30 weblogs now takes 10 minutes for 90.

➢ Most important, it lets me follow some 50 library weblogs that aren't very active—a growing trend—but worth hearing from when the bloggers have something to say. I'd strike most of those from a Favorites list because they're too much trouble.

I still worry about context. I still believe a multifaceted online (and offline) information regimen makes more sense than wanting to funnel everything through one resource. I wonder how Bloglines makes money, but that's a different issue.

The day I wrote this essay, Bloglines added another new feature that's delightful and also a little troublesome. To wit, I can (and did) set an option so that, when I open Bloglines, the only sites I'll see are ones with new material. (That doesn't always *mean* new material; I've noticed that some sites suddenly

show 6 or 8 old stories as renewed, for no apparent reason.) Add that to the wonderful feature that lets me set *one* story as "new" to get back to it later, instead of having to mark a whole set of stories as unread, and it's a nice tool.

The digerati will tell me I'm missing out on all sorts of other things—"delicious" with odd punctuation, for example, as well as "technorati" and its ilk. I suppose I am. Life is short.

Multimode?

In some ways, these ruminations are another "multimode" comment: Aggregators make sense some of the time; so does visiting specific web sites; so does email; so (for many people) does IM; so do books, newspapers, magazines and face-to-face contact. Karen Schneider recently posted an entry at *Free Range Librarian* inspired by an entry at *It's All Good*, the latter including this note about library staff: "I had lost sight of the fact that we need all kinds of people in our libraries." ("I" in this case doesn't refer to Karen.) Karen comments:

> Many of us are already "all kinds of people." I have many modes when I am not expecting or desiring digital services, even when others expect me to prefer them. I already started a kerfluffle on Web4Lib when I talked about how I prefer to be an "analog" student and instructor. Online teaching, in both directions, teacher and student, is my least-preferred method for learning. I learn much more efficiently in a physical classroom, with a flesh-and-blood instructor, a small community of students, my pen scratching away on a paper tablet. But I understand that all kinds of learning are good. (It's All Good, right?)

I won't quote the whole entry, but she goes on to say that she likes browsing books on shelves—and at times just wants the information, in whatever form. She thinks she's a better professional for having all of these sides—"Analog Karen, Digital Karen, and the Techno-Analog Remix Karen"—and thinks librarians need that ecumenicism to truly serve their communities. "A librarian providing storytime for toddlers doesn't need to be able to be able to understand the innards of the OAI protocol. But she does need to appreciate and respect the role in library services of those who do. That works the other way, as well."

There's more—and it would be an insult to Karen to say I couldn't have said it any better. In truth, I couldn't have said it as well.

Shortly after I wrote the above, the *Librarian In Black* added her own comment, "Techno-analog remix librarian." She's a "techie librarian" and seems to get comments about not working the desk or failing to understand that reference books are sometimes faster than the web. "Pshaw! I work the desk about 5 hours a week, a condition for me continuing as an e-Services Librarian." She believes every librarian should spend time on the desk to stay in touch with reality. And she gives a specific case where she understood the power of print: Trying to answer a virtual reference question on the difference between two types of a specific car model. "The manufacturer's website didn't help whatsoever, so I ran out and got our Chilton's."

I take slight issue with her final paragraph, at least in the real world and within larger libraries, although I believe she's right in principle and for most smaller libraries:

> Every librarian needs to be both analog and digital. Having two analog librarians and two digital librarians on staff isn't going to help you, unless you have one of each staffing the desk at all times. We all need to be "multi-mode"; we all need to have skills in both areas. Welcome to the world of modern librarianship.

Library Access to Scholarship

As usual, the last couple of months have seen lots of talk (on lists, weblogs, e-sources and in print) and maybe some action, although the action's not final as I write this.

Stirring the Pot

Sometimes it's hard to take statements at face value. Consider "How To Access Medical Information," a two-page August 2004 statement from the Professional/Scholarly Publishing Division of AAP, the Association of American Publishers. This statement informs us that "publishers and their library partners have invested hundreds of millions of dollars in the past decade to improve access to the biomedical journal literature." "Library partners"—what a wonderful turn of phrase! The publishers create electronic services to "deliver this information directly to the desktop of physicians, researchers, and other health professionals" and "other communities get access" because publishers kindly make those services available through libraries, "either under license or via free access." (It's that "under license" that accounts for much of that "hundreds of millions of dollars," of course.)

Eight bullet points follow to show how committed publishers are to making "medical research results widely and readily available." Publishers "actively participate in literature retrieval systems"—and you have to read that one carefully indeed. It highlights PubMed, "a free web-based service with

data *about* the biomedical journal literature" [emphasis added] and "web links that enable both medical research professionals and the general public to locate the full text of the articles, which are made available from the publishers' own web sites." Note that "made available" may and typically does mean "at the price publishers choose to charge."

"Publishers enable electronic access to their journals via flexible licensing arrangements…" and "most licenses let libraries give free access to any member of the public who is permitted to use the library on a walk-in basis. In the United States, most state-funded university libraries are open to the public." Those "flexible" licenses come at enormous cost, of course.

"Publishers endorse the practice of interlibrary loan"—but the bullet point is silent as to whether *electronic* licenses allow for ILL (which varies). "Publishers offer free and immediate alerting of published research via their own websites"—and here full-text articles *are* mentioned, with prices stated thus: "often as low as $3." Other bullets note that publishers work with document delivery services (almost always at a price), that "many" medical publishers make full-text articles available for free "either immediately, or within a period of months or a year after the publication date," that they participate in "innovative licensing arrangements" to encourage access in developing countries, and that they've created new services to bring the most relevant research to the attention of practitioners and consumers—mentioning in particular HighWire Press and WebMD. I wasn't aware that HighWire Press was created by publishers (I thought it was Mike Keller's idea carried out by Stanford University Libraries), but what do I know? The closing paragraph:

> The cooperative and aggressive actions of publishers to improve access to the medical literature means that in contrast to the situation a decade ago, where access was limited to the hundreds or thousands of paper copies in circulation, tens of millions of researchers and physicians now have desktop access—and the latest advances in medical research are made available rapidly to the interested public through their libraries or the publishers themselves.

A wonderful statement—but its timing, shortly after the NIH proposal to mandate OAI archiving for all that medical literature funded by NIH grants, strikes me as a little too convenient. If you read the statement quickly, you'd think all that medical information was readily available to everyone for nothing or almost nothing. You'd be wrong. All in all, this strikes me as a cleverly worded attempt to establish that all's right with the world, and those government bureaucrats and OA meddlers are just trying to solve a problem that doesn't exist. Maybe I'm paranoid, and this is actually nothing more than a sincere at-tempt by AAP/PSP to publicize their services. If so, I apologize in advance.

For the rest of this essay, I'm going to do something I should have done back in June: Provide a numbered key to the standard arguments against OA publishing (as opposed to unique arguments such as "it distracts attention and money from OAI archiving"), so I can simply list the numbers used in specific pieces. For this issue at least, here's a subset of those arguments:

➢ 1. STM publishing has developed over centuries and works just great as it is.
➢ 2. $1,500 (or $500 or $525) can't possibly pay the real costs per article; OA isn't sustainable without charging ($3,000, $4,500, whatever).
➢ 3. OA publishing weakens or undermines peer review.
➢ 4. Research grants don't include publication funding.
➢ 5. OA/article-fee publishing gives well-funded scientists advantages over others.
➢ 6. OA/article-fee publishing will prevent scientists in developing nations from publishing.
➢ 7. OA publishing undermines professional societies that subsidize their activities through journal profits.

I'm qualifying 5 and 6 because not all OA publishing involves article fees; quite a bit is sponsored in some other manner.

Martin Frank, Executive Director of APS (American Physiological Society in this case) published "Open Does Not Mean Free!" in *The Physiologist* 47:4. He offers arguments 1, 2, 4, and 5. Additionally, he suggests that it's unrealistic to expect NIH to come up with the "full cost of publication at a time of budgetary restraints." Interestingly, Frank cites the scientific journal arena as "over 5,000 scientific journals," one of the lowest numbers I've seen. I tend to agree with Frank's final statement, but I'm not sure that it has much to do with NIH's proposal to require the equivalent of OAI archiving *for government-funded research results*, which if done in government laboratories would automatically be in the public domain:

> We believe that a free society allows for the co-existence of many publishing models, including an author pays model, and therefore believe that it would be foolish and dangerous to do away with one model for another that remains largely unproven.

Now if I could only find the dragon that Frank's trying to slay—the powerful advocate who calls for immediately shutting down all traditional journals.

Fred Spilhous, another professional society Executive Director (American Geophysical Union this

time), sent a letter to *The Economist* in August objecting to their article on Open Access (which Spilhous puts in scare quotes). He calls it a "utopian vision" containing "fatal flaws." He uses argument 3 and adds suggestions of government interference with publishing and some other odd questions. He calls the results of OA "scavenging in a huge garbage heap." Peter Suber's quick commentary includes the note that arguing government interference at the point of publication is odd—since most funded research is already funded by governments. Suber also notes that "upfront funding" (i.e., article-fee funding) is not the only funding model for OA journals.

Remember Springer's disingenuous "Open Choice" initiative, where it offers free access if you pay a mere $3,000 per article? Derk Haank "blasted critics" of the initiative and, of course, emphasized Argument 2. His response to the objection that Springer still insists on taking copyright? Don't laugh: "Copyright is not that important to us, but we are using it here as a mechanism to protect the author from having articles taken by other commercial publishers." Right.

Speaking of Martin Frank (a few paragraphs back), he and two other APS officials wrote "A not-for-profit publisher's perspective on open access," which will appear in *Serials Review* 30:4. It's an invited paper, available as a 16-page manuscript. The article describes "A decade of progress" in "how far STM publishing has come in terms of providing electronic access to information" (a variant of #1), including APS' own experience; includes a section on "Government-run scientific publishing" that somehow manages to include PLoS; and continues with a bunch of reasons that OA is a bad thing. I would say that the article is valuable as a history of APS and non-profit experience—but in fact, only about four paragraphs (less than one page) are about APS. This is mostly another anti-OA screed. It's a different one, though: I only recognize #1 and #2 from the standard list, although #2 is driven into the ground. Other arguments include flat assertions that PLoS and BioMed Central institutional memberships are paid for by libraries (certainly not true of national memberships); that somehow allowing a tradeoff between prepaid membership fees and per-article processing charges is directly comparable to (or at least no less objectionable than) "using subscriptions as ransom for access"; and a direct attack on the NIH/centralized repository approach based on the idea that modern searching means it doesn't matter where documents are deposited.

Some elements of the article are simply strange, such as the early statement that "ten years ago…the era of online publication had not yet begun," which for a 2004 paper is truly ahistorical. (I just looked

up the *Public-Access Computer Systems Review* special issue on e-journals, which included essays relating to at least six of the e-journals already in existence: It appeared in early 1991. E-journals go back *at least* to 1987.) Somehow, the fact that STM content is far more accessible now than it was in the past (true) is offered as the answer to those who say that government-funded science should be *fully* accessible. I see some confusion, I think deliberate, between OA publishing and OAI archiving. The escalation of claims for the true cost of online publishing is escalated once more, with a claim that the cost per article of *Journal of Clinical Investigation* is around $6,000—*that's* expensive processing! And the numbers involved with APS' experiment in "author-pays" publishing seem a little odd. *Physiological Genomics* will make papers immediately available for a $1,500 fee; otherwise there's a one-year embargo, Only 10% of authors have paid the fee. But the institutional online subscription price for *Physiological Genomics* is $205. That price raises the question: What are the true costs of article processing for that reasonably priced online journal? $1,500 seems high—but I don't have access to the full set of numbers.

At the same time, much of the article is reasonable, at least to my mind. If Michael Eisen of PLoS really did call it "morally superior" to *Nature, Science*, and others, you can count me out of that particular crusade. The authors say "Not-for-profit journals are not generally seen as the source of the cost increase problem," and I believe that's true—noting that some journals issued under the aegis of professional societies are most definitely profitable, whatever their tax status.

The Creative Librarian commented on this article in a September 22, 2004 post. CT notes some of the good points but also notes, "The authors seem to be blind as to how bad the [library costs for subscriptions] problem has gotten… The current model they consider a 'successful evolution' is actually an unsustainable house of cards." "The problem with most of the article is that the authors do not distinguish between the not-for-profit publishers, who according to this article have been reasonable in price increases, and the for-profit set who seem to be trying to drive libraries bankrupt. It's possible that a separate set of rules needs to be made for not-for-profits but the authors offer no solutions other than living with the problem and hoping it will sort itself out."

Another in our parade of Society Executive Directors Against Open Access Publishing, (SEDAOP?), John H. Ewing offered his "point of view" in the October 1, 2004 *Chronicle of Higher Education*: "Open access to journals won't lower prices." He does admit that journals publishing is in crisis, then asserts that OA arguments represent "misdirection"

of the sort magicians use. Further, he says it's a mistake, based on "information must be free" ideology.

I see versions of arguments 1, 2, 3, 5 and 7. He deals with access issues, in part, as follows: "Of course, e-mail makes it possible for another scholar to ask an author for a copy of an article and receive it the same day." Problem solved—as long as you're part of the inner circle and therefore (a) know of the article, (b) know or can find out the author's email address, and (c) are yourself of a stature such that you can assume the author will respond to your email instead of deleting it unread. Ewing also says, "Commercial publishers are delighted by the inadvertent misdirection because it diverts attention from the exorbitant prices they charge." While I am aware that some OAI advocates don't care about exorbitant journal prices, I will assert that *no* library advocate of OA, whether OA publishing or OAI archiving, has had their attention diverted from the prices of the big commercial publishers.

Part of me wants to buy into Ewing's essay because he directly addresses the problem I care most about: Costs to libraries. His solution?

> Scholars and librarians have to stop dealing with high-priced journals, as authors, editors, referees, or subscribers. Soon the publishers of less-expensive journals will grow, and those of more-expensive journals will decline. The less-expensive journals will publish more papers, making them more efficient, and society publishers will earn slightly more profit, which they can reinvest in their disciplines.

If only it were that simple. If every ARL library simply stopped all of its subscriptions to journals published by Elsevier, Springer, and others of their ilk, that would certainly solve the STM-related budget problems of those libraries. Let's not mention the problems that would be caused by that solution, particularly for scholars at those institutions that have substituted access for ownership and don't have back print runs of the journals involved. Would the libraries survive the campus political firestorm to enjoy their improved budget status?

Finally (for this section), here's "Electronic cultures and clinics: Reasons to be hysterical (and hopeful)," the 2004 Elsevier Library Connect medical library lecture, given May 25, 2004 at the Medical Library Association Annual Meeting by Dr. Richard Horton, editor-in-chief of *The Lancet*. It's a transcript of what must have been an engaging talk. Indeed, I found the first nine pages (of 15 total) fascinating, and was taken aback to read the claim that one of the key OA declarations ("Berlin II") apparently calls for the *replacement* of conventional scholarly communications, which is overreaching. Unfortunately, after that, we get arguments 1, 3, 7, 2, and 5 (in that order), with an astonishing

$10,000 per paper offered as a realistic number. Additionally, Horton makes a statement that I will assert is untrue and am certain is unprovable. He quotes a statement from a Wellcome Trust report, "Open Access means that for learned societies they have quote, nothing to fear." To which he says: "*Not one person* who works in a learned society believes that." Not one? There is not a single learned society in the world with one employee who believes OA can't harm the society? There are no learned societies that have *adopted* OA and can't be harmed by its progress? Even the mighty Elsevier editorial offices don't have that kind of competitive intelligence.

The *Nature* Discussion Concludes

THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK in *Cites & Insights* 4:7 discussed seven of the first 25 (or so) essays in an ongoing *Nature* "Web focus: Access to the literature." That discussion has now apparently concluded, given the unsigned 35th essay that's unsigned and seems to comment on the forum as a whole. You can get to the whole set of essays at www.nature.com/nature/focus/accessdebate/. A few comments on the last six essays, in numeric order:

Sally Morris (ALPSP) and Christine Baldwin
"What do societies do with their publishing surpluses?" That question introduces the results of a survey of society publishers—admittedly skewed toward UK societies and those publishing through Blackwell Publishing—and discusses some consequences of reducing those surpluses. It's an expanded form of #7, and as usual says nothing to the question of why libraries should be held responsible for funding all those other activities. (I discussed this survey in *Cites & Insights* 4:11, the most recent LIBRARY ACCESS TO SCHOLARSHIP essay.)

Ian Rowlands, Dave Nicholas, Paul Huntington
These three, from the Centre for Information Behaviour and the Evaluation of Research (you can guess it's British!), offered "Journal publishing: what do authors want?" It's based on a *huge* survey—91,500 authors who had published in ISI-indexed journals over the past 18 months, with 3,787 fully completed responses. While the responses are interesting, they mostly support the sense that most scholars still don't pay much attention to library budget problems or, in fact, the outrageous prices charged for the journals in which they publish. Those are someone else's problems—and maybe that's how scholars *should* react.

Most scholars want to "narrowcast"—they want to reach researchers in their own fields. Most (but only 74%) want to reach researchers in other fields, and a slim majority (56%) want to reach education

professionals. Only 40% care about reaching policy makers and 18% care about reaching the general public. Scholars want "the imprimature of quality and integrity that a peer-reviewed, high-impact title can offer, together with reasonable levels of publisher service." What other results would we expect?

Some other numbers are double-edged swords. The essay says authors are "generally happy with their access to the journals literature"—but only *61%* say they can "currently get hold of most or all of the titles they need." That leaves 39% who are shy of access. Sure, there's more access than five years ago (although 11% say it's worse). Then there are the "author-pays" possibilities, limited to the 18% of authors who knew something about OA and worded rather nicely: "If all journals were Open Access, what do you consider would be a reasonable payment to have your paper published *in the best journal in your field?*"

49% of authors still said "nothing," with another 46% offering less than $1,000; only 6% of the largest group of respondents (medicine, allied health and veterinary science) would be willing to pay more than $1,000, and no field showed more than 19% (earth and planetary sciences, but that's really 13 respondents!). Overall, only 16% were willing to pay more than $500. The authors add commentary suggesting that most scholarly authors don't really think that publishers add much value—which may help explain their disinclination to see author payments.

John Ewing, American Mathematical Society

Here's Ewing again—and this time it's personal. His essay, "The orthodoxy of Open Access!," could be considered libelous if he named names. Here's the statement:

> The proponents of OA are not just offering one more good idea; they are promoting the one true faith, and they demand that we all become converts.

He quotes the Budapest Initiative, PLoS, and Harold Varmus. I would say he reads quite a bit into their statements, but—more importantly—there's a lot more to OA than PLoS/Varmus and Budapest. He goes on to squeeze versions of 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6 into a relatively short essay. Ewing raises some good points, but does so in such an offensive manner that I'm hard put to recommend the essay. Maybe I'm wrong: Maybe you can only be an OA proponent if you adhere 100% to the Budapest/PLoS line (assuming that's a single line). But, to quote Ewing, I'm not Dopey…and I don't believe it.

Bernard Ross, Association of Computing Machinery

Ross entitles his essay "Electronic publishing models and the public good" and comes to an unusual early conclusion: He believes that *authors* are on the side of OA and don't care about publishers, while *librarians* find themselves more closely allied with publishers. I believe the survey cited above (Rowlands et al) suggests fairly forcefully that most authors know nothing of OA and that, of those who do, most won't support the economic model. On the other hand, I agree with some of his reasons librarians might understand the concerns of publishers: librarians know that publishing isn't free, appreciate publications, believe that publishers add value, and understand that electronic publishing can be complicated. I suppose librarians "have shared similar anxieties about being disintermediated along with publishers"—but some publishers seem as willing to dismiss the contributions of libraries and librarians as are some within the OA camp. (Whenever someone calls the 70% of academic library budgets that goes for salaries and the like "overhead" I want to scream, but who would hear me?)

On the whole, I think this is a good essay, worth reading and thinking about. He uses the higher range of cost estimates for articles ($1,500 to $5,000), but contrasts that with estimates of the actual *research cost* per article published: $50,000, $150,000, or $250,000 to $300,000! Given the amount of least-publishable-unit publishing that happens, those are truly astonishing numbers. I wonder about this comment: "As Open Access costs shift away from the user to the producer, scientists find themselves becoming publishers." I don't understand: By that logic, *libraries* are currently the publishers, and I don't believe that to be true.

A declaration of interest at the end raises a touch of argument #7, but only a touch.

Kate Worlock, EPS

At its start, this essay—"The pros and cons of Open Access"—appears fairly even-handed, but as it continues I note that arguments *against* OA are seldom refuted, while statements *for* OA seem to carry direct counters. Arguments 2 (at great detail, but in a form that biases the discussion hugely toward traditional publishing) and 7 predominate, and Worlock throws in the association of OA with Stewart Brand's silly "information wants to be free."

Unsigned: "Experiments in publishing"

Nature is a traditional publisher. Why would we expect that the publisher's summary of this discussion would be even-handed? Arguments #2 and #7, and an indirect but strong whiff of #1, show up along with direct attacks on (*Nature's* interpretation of) the NIH proposal and a pretty good indirect roundhouse on the UK study. Most of this essay is a checklist of "how publishing adds value." It's a good

list, worth reading as a reminder of why effective refereed publishing and dissemination *will* have non-trivial costs, no matter what the publication model.

National Institutes of Health

Action and discussion on the NIH open-access plan continue. A few points along the way:

➢ On August 24, 2004, a press release announced the formation of the Alliance for Taxpayer Access, "an unprecedented coalition of public interest groups" that will urge NIH and Congress "to ensure that peer-reviewed articles on taxpayer-funded research at NIH become fully accessible and available on line and at no extra cost to the American public." The new group does represent a broad range of groups, including AALL, ALA, ACRL, ARL, the Medical Library Association, SPARC and a number of other library associations and university libraries, but also many health and disease-specific advocacy groups. Details are at www.taxpayeraccess.org.

➢ Two days later, a group of 25 Nobel laureates sent an open letter to Congress "to express our strong support for the House Appropriations Committee's recent direction to NIH to develop an open, taxpayer access policy requiring that a complete electronic text of any manuscript reporting work supported by NIH grants or contracts be supplied to the National Library of Medicine's PubMed Central." That lengthy sentence does state the precise support in full; it's followed by several paragraphs about the importance of science and the need for consumers to have access to current research. It cites the same $30 article fee as the ATA statement, but this time it's "or more" rather than "as much as." The letter also explains why PubMed Central access "will not mean the end of medical and scientific journals at all" and notes that mandated open access would only apply to NIH-funded research. The laureates include 18 winners in Physiology or Medicine and 7 in Chemistry.

➢ In early September, Peter Suber offered a first take on the September 3 plan from NIH and how it differs from the July 14 House Appropriations report language. The September plan drops the requirement for *immediate* access if NIH paid any part of the article's publication cost, substituting OA within six months or sooner. It details what gets deposited at PMC and what NIH fund-ing triggers the OA plan—notably including articles whose underlying research "was supported in whole or in part by NIH funding," a potentially tricky requirement. The September plan offers a range of specific goals from NIH, including improving the health of Americans, sharing and supporting public access to results of NIH-funded research, and balancing the need for access with the ability of publishers to preserve peer review, editing and quality control.

➢ A September 13 news report from *Library Journal* notes that NIH director Zerhouni recently met twice with stakeholders, but that some lawmakers were backing off their call for immediate access—and that Senator Arlen Spector said that he would not add a call for public access to the Senate version of the appropriations bill.

➢ Rudy Baum, editor-in-chief of *Chemical & Engineering News*, attacked the NIH plan forthrightly in a September 20, 2004 editorial, "Socialized science." He says NIH director Zerhouni "seems hell-bent on imposing an 'open access' model of publishing on researchers receiving NIH grants" and this action "will inflict long-term damage on the communication of scientific results and on maintenance of the archives of scientific knowledge." If that's not enough, Baum says it's "the opening salvo in the open-access movement's unstated, but clearly evident, goal of placing responsibility for the entire scientific enterprise in the federal government's hand. Open access, in fact, equates with socialized science." So here we are: Red-baiting as the latest anti-OA tactic. I'll admit that I've never seen an OA document that would support Baum's astonishing charge, but I haven't seen them all. Baum also asserts that subscriptions really aren't subscriptions at all anymore—they're access fees, and e-publishing "shift[s] primary responsibility for maintaining the archive of STM literature from libraries to publishers." Which then gives Baum license to suggest that if OA squeezes revenues, publishers could "decide to cut costs by turning off access to their archives." Baum repeats that the "unspoken crusade" of OA advocates is "to socialize all aspects of science, putting the federal government in charge of funding science, communicating science, and maintaining the archive of scientific knowledge." Hot stuff, if ludicrous from what I've seen of (most) OA advocates.

➢ A September 21 editorial at Data Conversion Laboratory has a nice way of telling part of the story, as in its lead sentence: "Government committees in the U.S. and U.K. are taking steps to promote free online access to scientific literature." I don't see the qualifier "taxpayer-funded" in that sentence, although it does appear in describing the Nobel letter. But here's the first subhead: "Unfair government intervention." That's a paraphrase of AAP's statement, which (as usual) says AAS doesn't oppose OA publishing, "but only its premature and unwarranted imposition through government mandate." Every description of the NIH plans that I've seen call for the equivalent of OAI archiving, albeit at PubMed Central—and, recently, with a six-month moving wall. That is *not* OA publishing, but then this editorial explicitly *defines* OA as being author-pay publishing. The editorial quotes a range of society publishers and includes a list of resources titled "the issues laid bare." It's quite a "balanced" list: Statements from AAP/PSP, AAP's Pat Schroeder, and a pro-publisher *Guardian* editorial, along with a pointer to DOAJ.

➢ September 23 brings a letter from BioMed Central's Jan Velterop to NIH's Elias Zerhouni. Velterop notes that roughly 15% of BMC's articles indicate some form of NIH funding—and that all BMC articles are deposited immediately at PubMedCentral. He argues BMC as a counter-argument to "the reservations expressed by traditional publishers as to the economic sustainability of an open access publishing model." He also endorses the six-month delay as "a sufficient and appropriate help" for traditional publishers to adjust to a new model.

➢ Barbara Quint cheers on the NIH in her "Up Front" column in the October 2004 *Information Today*, calling the plan "the day of liberation" and "only the first of many." The column is typical Quint, with strong opinions and strong language to state them.

➢ The October 2, 2004 *SPARC Open Access Newsletter* (issue #78) leads with "A busy month of action on the NIH open-access plan." You'll find loads of links to various documents and statements in the essay. Interesting points: the U.S. Chamber of Commerce supports the NIH plan, as do the American Association of Universities and National Academy of Science—but the CC endorsement is the most startling. The *New England Journal of Medicine* has an endorsing editorial—but still calls for journals to hold copyright "in order to block the redistribution of mangled copies of the text" (a rationale for copyright transfer that I've never quite understood). John Regazzi of Elsevier gave a typical Elsevier "yes, but" response: "No one can argue against giving the public access to NIH information…but…the NIH proposal is moving too fast." Since Elsevier now allows OAI archiving, which differs from the NIH plan primarily in using distributed rather than centralized archives, things are already complicated. Suber notes that the current NIH plan "requests" rather than "requires" article deposit at PMC—but that there's reason to believe failure to do so would endanger future grants. There's also a preliminary estimate for the cost of the larger PMC digital library: $2.5 million (per year, I assume), not the $100 million suggested by some critics.

The deadline for a full plan is December 1. I see nothing in the NIH plan that calls for OA *publishing*, which makes the tenor of some criticisms a bit odd. What's currently planned is a publisher-friendly modified version of OA archiving, differing from OAI archives in two key respects: There's a six-month "toll access" wall, and papers are either deposited in a central repository or appear in publisher archives with pointers from that repository.

That same October 2 *SOAN* includes fascinating notes from 1974 about the dangers that photocopying poses for STM journals—remember the Williams & Wilkins suit? He also offers "a haiku introduction to open access," a "mercifully small sampling" of 15 haiku. I'll quote the first, second, and last:

> If you publish it,/and readers can't afford it,/does it make a sound?

> They don't pay authors,/editors or referees./Then they want the rights.

> The current system/evolved over centuries./So did dinosaurs.

Miscellany

It appears that LOCKSS is making progress; Project Muse is involved, half a dozen OA journals are co-operating, and both HighWire Press and Berkeley Electronic Press are experimenting. For more information, see lockss.stanford.edu/projectstatus.htm

Carol Tenopir offered "Open access alternatives" in the July 15, 2004 *Library Journal*. She notes, "Open access publishing can have many definitions, and pros and cons vary with the definitions." Some OA advocates would argue that OA has fairly precise

definitions—see notes on *SOAN* 77 under "Longer articles and items." I tend to like the looser formulations, as long as they're not too loose. While Tenopir includes a touch of #6 in her discussion, she offers a reasonable overview, cautioning that "no one answer is a panacea" and that it isn't time to throw out any of the options.

PLoS Medicine "goes live" October 19. "There is no doubt in our minds that open access is *the* future of medical publishing," says the press release [emphasis added]; multiple models have little place in the PLoS worldview.

Longer Articles and Items

SPARC Open Access Newsletter 77 (September 2, 2004)

Peter Suber's lead essay, "Praising progress, preserving precision," wants to maintain strict definitions for OA while welcoming initiatives that widen access without meeting those definitions. "The best-known part of the BBB [Budapest, Bethesda, Berlin] definition is that OA must be free of charge for all users with an internet connection. However, the BBB definition doesn't stop at free online access." What else? The Budapest statement is long; the Bethesda and Berlin statements add permissions in briefer form. For a work to be *truly* OA, the copyright holder must consent to let users "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."

So is *Cites & Insights* OA? Apparently not (even if it was scholarly)—because I don't automatically agree to let users republish this material in priced publications. It appears that, in Creative Commons terms, true OA *only* allows the "By" license, not the "Noncommercial" license. But Suber goes on to say that BBB does *not* require removing barriers to commercial re-use, even though I can't see anything in either of the statements that would allow such a barrier. More to the point, this essay is concerned with the "false sharpening" of the OA definition. He doesn't think that derivative works and commercial re-use should be required parts of OA, even though he personally prefers both. (I've reread the cited definitions four times now, and I *still* can't see how an OA publication can pass the definitions and prevent commercial re-use…and that's a shame.)

Suber goes on to praise initiatives that, by his standards, aren't really OA—but do improve access. That is, I think, appropriate. I'm not surprised that most abusers of OA definitions are commercial publishers, including the truly bizarre case of Thomson Derwent offering a fixed fee for use and calling that

"open access licensing." Maybe we need a clearinghouse for "enhanced access" initiatives.

Suber wants to educate newcomers and maintain clean definitions. I think that's great. I also think the BBB statements are difficult to read cleanly, at least based on my inability to read them the way Suber reads them. Clarity would be useful, and that clarity might be achievable by referring to a Creative Commons license. BioMed Central makes it easy (if perhaps tightening OA too much): You have to agree to a "By" license to publish in their journals. If there was common agreement that "By-NC" was the *minimum* standard—thus allowing copying, noncommercial redistribution, and all the rest—I think there might be more clarity. Creative Commons and the OA groups are all working to increase access to creative works; maybe it makes sense for OA to refer to CC's careful legalisms.

"The effect of open access and downloads ('hits') on citation impact: a bibliography of studies," OpCit project. opcit.eprints.org/ oacitation-biblio.html

This ongoing chronological bibliography may be worth bookmarking and checking every few months. I downloaded the September 15, 2004 version. There's very little annotation, but it's a good brief bibliography on a narrow—but important—subject.

Antelman, Kristin, "Do open-access articles have a greater research impact?" *College & Research Libraries* 65:5 (September 2004): 372-82.

C&RL isn't (yet) open access, but I believe Antelman posted the PDFs of this article to an accessible repository as soon as that lack was pointed out. The short answer is Yes—"across a variety of disciplines, open-access articles have a greater research impact than articles that are not freely available." For the longer answer, read the well-prepared, well-written article.

Davis, Phil, Terry Ehling, Oliver Habicht, Sarah How, John M. Saylor, and Kizer Walker, "Report of the CUL Task Force on Open Access Publishing," August 9, 2004. 27 p.

Cornell *produces* a lot of scholarly articles: More than 3,600 a year, according to the dynamite appendix to this study. Cornell University Library *spends* a lot on scholarly journals: $4 million, or half of Cornell's entire serials/database expenses. Of that $4 million, 43% goes to Elsevier—and 16% of Cornell-authored articles appear in Elsevier journals. Remove Elsevier, Kluwer, Wiley, and Springer, and

Cornell's journal expenditures go down to $1 million—although 70% of Cornell-authored articles appear in all the rest of the journals.

The CUL task force sought to bring some facts and clarity to the table, meeting weekly for the first half of 2004 to discuss issues, coordinating research, and compile the report. While the resulting report is only one data point, it's an unusually thoughtful and detailed one—and it's one from an institution that could logically stand to pay *more* in a universal OA publishing system, at least if the true cost per article turned out to be $1,500 (or any sum above $1,100). (Here's a direct statement: "It is unlikely that CUL will save money under any producer-payment scenario.")

The report looks at a range of possible scenarios, takes a clear-eyed look at costs and benefits, includes an extensive bibliography, and is well worth reading. Strong OA advocates will not be happy with the results—but maybe they should pay attention, since this is as carefully considered a case as I've seen.

Specific recommendations include fostering and supporting OA initiatives "that respond to or resonate with real needs of specific scholarly communities," applying carefully-stated and sensible selection criteria in considering OA projects, and continuing an environmental scan on the state of OA—and raising awareness among scholars. Here's the paragraph that precedes the specific recommendations:

> While the traditional subscription model has certainly been abused by some publishing interests, our Task Force is convinced that subscription can still serve as an equitable model for disseminating scholarship under some circumstances, particularly when administered by scholarly societies, university presses, and academic libraries. We have concluded that the Open Access and subscription models can coexist and are in fact likely to do so for the foreseeable future. The pragmatic approach our Task Force is recommending for CUL should be understood as a continuation of the course the Library has taken up to now vis-à-vis Open Access publishing: a flexible, experimental approach that commits to support specific, viable applications tailored to particular needs, pursued as a key component of a diversified strategy of scholarly communications reform.

Feedback & Followup
Wikis, Reading and More

The discussion on Wikipedia and wikis in general continued after I posted *Cites & Insights* 4:12. I received two direct feedbacks and followed discussions on Web4Lib and elsewhere—including an interesting new initiative involving Wikipedia itself.

Lars Aronsson offered an informal historical commentary on the emergence of Wikipedia in a September 15, 2004 Web4Lib post. He begins, "Much of the current discussion of Wikipedia and wikis in general is similar to trying to understand world history by only looking at newspapers from 1920" and, after noting some internet "open source encyclopedia" background, concludes:

> Wikis and blogs are specializations of websites that are easier to host and maintain by an individual, a group or the open public. You no longer need a webmaster employed to update your own website. For the first time in history we actually have something that looks like an open access, open content online encyclopedia. It might not be perfect and it most certainly will not make you a NASDAQ millionaire, but it seems likely it will be around for the next few years. You could jump on now, or wait until the end of the decade.

The next day, Marc Truitt added a different slant to the "Wikipedia and authority" discussion by posting a new LC subject authority record—one that uses a Wikipedia entry as one of two "source data" elements for "Hinnies" (offspring of a male horse and a female donkey). "The lesson? I suppose if Wikipedia is good enough for our own use in establishing authorized controlled-vocabulary headings, then it's good enough for… well, you get the idea." But here's the odd part: The Wikipedia-sourced 670 adds *nothing* to the other 670, taken from *American Heritage Dictionary*—and omits "hybrid" and the plural form.

Christina's LIS Rant has a post related to "articles ripping Wikipedia," with a "rant…on teachers and school library media specialists who can only teach formulas for determining accuracy." She goes on to object to the lack of nuance and to offer part of her own model (or heuristic):

> Look at the page including formatting, style, grammar, punctuation. Notice if it says who's responsible (this won't make or break the page because Steven Hawking may know absolutely nothing about the eating habits of the North American Pika). Look at when it was last updated. Does the information in it make sense and fit with what you already know? If it disagrees with what you already know, can you find another source to explain the discrepancy? Don't rely on the URL (a college freshman's failing history paper probably won't have the best information even though it's on an .edu site). Does it cite its sources? What are the sources? If you have a chance, look at the other pages on the site or archived posts to get an idea of the slant of the writer…

She concludes, "just because the Wikipedia articles are not signed doesn't mean they don't have good information." I like her heuristic, at least as a starting point—and particularly appreciate the points that, say, world-class physicists could be cranks on disease and vitamins, and .edu sites include loads of notorious hoaxes as well as good information.

David Mattison said nice things; we may be seeing another expert treatment of wikis in the future.

Michael Lorenzen (Central Michigan University) sent this commentary:

> I enjoyed reading your article on Wikipedia. There is one additional area though that you might want to address in a future look at Wikipedia.
>
> Authors at Wikipedia are encouraged to copy public domain sources to create articles. The problem that this causes is that many of the Wikipedia articles are based on US Federal publications as all of these are in the public domain. While the government sources are generally good, they also have pro-American and other biases.
>
> For example, compare the History of Andorra article at Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History of Andorra) with the State Departments Background notes on Andorra (http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/ 3164.htm). (Scroll down to history and compare.) There are many other national histories which are almost word for word copies of the US State Department Background Notes history data. Other articles were originally based on State Department writing as well but have been modified. Another example is in education. Compare the ERIC Digest Transformative Learning in Adulthood (http://www.ericfacility.net/databases/ERIC_Digests/ed423426.html) with the Wikiedia article Transformative Learning (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transformative learning).
>
> Another problem with the extensive use of old public domain information is also evident. The 1911 Encyclopedia Britannia is used heavily in many history articles. While this data is not bad, it is dated and the last century of scholarship is ignored. For example, see the article at Wikipedia on the Roman Emperor Maxentius (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ Maxentius) compared with the 1911 encyclopedia article (http://19.1911encvclopedia.org/M/MA/MAXENTIUS MARCUS AURELIUS VALERIUS. htm).
>
> I still like Wikipedia but this continued reliance on old or governmentally produced information in an encyclopedia is clearly a problem.

Since Michael has alerted readers to these problems, I don't feel the need to investigate them on my own. Particularly given "User:Xed/CROSSBOW" at Wikipedia itself. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Xed/ CROSSBOW). The page as I printed it (September 28, 2004) was 13 print pages, and for all I know it may still be growing.

What's CROSSBOW? "Committee Regarding Overcoming Serious Systemic Bias On Wikipedia," if you must. Or, to give the description, "This page is for people who have signed up to help create a beta version of a section which helps to reduce Wikipedia's inherent structural biases by providing easier access to 'less-travelled' articles." The document discusses the demographics of Wikipedia's contributors (mostly North American "computer-literate types," the systemic (*not* systematic) bias toward stuff that's covered on the internet, stuff relevant to English-speaking nations, technological topics and other topics that interest, well, geeks (libertarianism, science fiction…)

The writer suggests that every Wikipedia contributor who goes offline for source material helps to reduce the systemic bias—and that if people are willing to stretch their intellectual horizons, some of the other problems might be addressable. The discussion is forthright, even hard-edged, but it makes good points. Theres a manifesto that includes suggested strategies and tactics. An interesting document, worth noting if you're planning to become a Wikipedia contributor.

As I think about this stuff and my own experiences, both with Wikipedia and with the claims of the most adamant Wikipedia advocates, I think one problem is triumphalism—and that's not unique to Wikipedia. For extreme Wikipedia advocates, it's not enough to agree that Wikipedia is a useful (if imperfect) resource—it's got to be "better than *Britannica*" or "sweep away print encyclopedias." Well, that's probably not going to happen. Nor should it need to. Wikipedia should be able to stand on its own as a worthwhile resource—better on new developments than a traditional encyclopedia, able to provide links to additional resources better than a *print* encyclopedia (but *Encarta* does links very well), and likely always to be unusually deep in techie fields. It already does some things better than traditional encyclopedias; I think it unlikely that it will ever do some other things as well. *So what*? Wikipedia is *different* and valuable in its own right. Get rid of the triumphalism, concentrate on the defects and you have a winning collaborative effort—and a lot less heat. (For dictionary freaks and those who didn't know the word: While I didn't realize "religious" was part of the definition, I would say that most "digital is always better!" purists do have a religious quality to their pronouncements, so I can live with the dictionary definition.)

The NEA Survey

Paul Collins has an essay in the September 8-14, 2004 *Village Voice:* "Decline and fall and fall and fall." He begins, "I'm amazed you're reading this—or reading anything at all." He goes on to offer a one-paragraph quote that appears to be from NEA's Dana Goia—but there's a kicker. Consider these sentences: "Greater understanding of human motivation and behavior, for instance, can be gleaned from a multi-dimensional novel than from the fleeting images on a video screen. The indictment to be made against the Internet as a disturber of reading in America is considerable."

The first sentence came from a New York *Times* piece published in 1959. The second, substituting

"America" for "England" and "Internet" for "motor" (short for "motorcar"), is from a *1909* article titled "Motor Enemy of Reading."

Collins notes survey problems. For one, he's not impressed that history and memoirs—and, for that matter, essays—don't count as "literature." "See, *Bergdorf Blondes* is literature; *Persepolis* is not." He notes that the survey question rules out students who read for coursework and don't have time to read novels on the side, so that English majors become "nonreaders." "And then, when you're done working on your term paper, you can relax in the campus coffeehouse Not-Reading newspapers and magazines, and fire up your laptop to Not-Read the blogs and the latest wire reports."

Collins suggests that the literature:charity correlation might be the opposite—that people with the time and education to read novels might be better situated to provide charity. He shares my qualms about the significance of telephone surveys, noting the many ways (voice mail, machine screening, caller ID) that people can now "select themselves out of the pool of respondents *without changing the alleged response rate.*" And he notes that the statistical projections are "pure Rufus T. Firefly." Here's Collins' version of NEA's bizarro extrapolation (to say that "literary reading as a leisure activity will virtually disappear in half a century"):

> Really? To answer this question, let's look for a moment at the photograph of NEA chairman Dana Gioia displayed in the report's introduction. He's a trim-looking fellow: I'd guess about 165 pounds. Now, let's say that Dana's been hitting the maple scones lately, and gained four pounds in the last month. By applying *Reading at Risk*'s statistical model of linear progression, I hereby predict that in 50 years time, NEA chairman Dana Gioia will weigh *2,565 pounds*.

Collins notes that one of Gioia's presumed causes for rampant aliteracy, video games and the internet, has the problem that the report itself explicitly notes that no such causality can be found. Collins concludes:

> "*Reading at Risk* is not a report that the National Endowment for the Arts is happy to issue," Gioia insists. I'm not so sure of that. Gioia seems happy indeed to grind out the old hurdy-gurdy song of cultural decay, dolefully performed by codgers who believe that Reading is declining and falling, rather than merely Reading as They Knew It. What Gioia and centuries of soundalikes never seem to learn is that it *does* keep falling, but toward a cultural ground forever speeding away from underneath it. Art, it seems, is rather like a satellite—perpetually hurtling earthward, and let curiously fixed in its orbit.

The One That Isn't Here

Dorothea Salo offered a comment on the most recent LIBRARY ACCESS TO SCHOLARSHIP including this sentence: "What's most amusing is that clearly, it's not the virtues of Open Access that have Crawford defending it—it's the weird and unsavory garbage coming from OA detractors." That's not quite true. My complex view of Open Access ("complex" possibly being a euphemism for "unsettled"), which I tried to explain in the first few paragraphs of that section, stems from my primary interest in *library* futures—in the ability of academic libraries to acquire, organize, and maintain the record of civilization and thought and to put readers in touch with that record. As a humanist, I believe that books (monographs and otherwise) constitute a vital portion of that record and that indexing, cataloging, reference and preservation are all essential aspects of carrying out the library mission. I cover Open Access issues because I believe that (some of) Open Access has (some) potential to ease the library resource problems. I do try to point out the obvious nonsense in anti-Open Access discussions, just as I occasionally point out what I consider to be flaws in the thinking and writing of OA advocates.

The latter, and my primary interest in *library* health, is an ongoing source of difficulty. On August 18, Bernie Sloan posted an item about that essay to the SPARC Open Access Forum (SOAF). Stevan Harnad seized upon that item, quoted what he called a "long passage" (the ten brief paragraphs making up that introductory argument), and proceeded to do a classic Harnad commentary on August 19. Oddly, he doesn't characterize his five-page commentary on my one-page editorial as "long." In his commentary—which admittedly *is* brief by Harnadian standards—he asserts that the "fundamental fact about OA" that the primary interest of the research community is freeing access to maximize research impact "systematically escapes" me. It does not, of course; the essay is there *precisely* to point out that *my* interest—and, I believe, the interest of many academic librarians—is different from the research community's interest. He calls this interest in freeing up library funds "his [that is, my] own interest" and claims I assign "no weight at all" to the research community's interest, which is pure poppycock. He then goes on to use his standard Harnad's Hammer tactic: Repetition after repetition of a catch phrase—this time, 8 repetitions of "The primary task now is to reach 100% OA, as soon as possible" in less than five pages—presumably in the belief that repeating something often enough makes it indisputably true. He also took me to task for offering a speculation of

a sort similar to earlier speculations by none other than Harnad.

I wrote a two-page reply (also posted August 19), small portions of which follow:

> I wrote that editorial to clarify my primary interest in continuing to do "Library Access to Scholarship" sections in Cites & Insights.

> Does that mean I don't believe there are other interests? Of course not.

> Does it mean that I believe everyone else should follow the same primary interests? Of course not.

> Am I satisfied that "the primary interest" of the research community is as Stevan Harnad says it is?

> I have no way of knowing, although you'd think that if it was "the primary interest" of the whole research community, there would *be* 100% OA, or at least 85% (or whatever the so-called green number is these days). …

> Since I'm not a scholar, and since there's plenty of commentary on the impact problem, I don't choose to focus on that area: It would be redundant and a waste of my time and energy…

> Stevan Harnad knows what "The primary task" is, says so repeatedly, has never been shy about saying so—and seems to be satisfied that this should be "The primary task" for everyone involved. That is, of course, his right.

> I am, however, satisfied that Steven Harnad has no authority to determine what my motivations and "primary tasks" should be. …

David Goodman offered comments on both SH's essay and my reply—an excellent response (also posted August 19, if you're perusing the SOAF archives). Harnad chose to offer brief responses to my response and Goodman's comments. He seemed surprised that I'd read his earlier stuff but wondered why I failed to "learn" from it. Having "learned" not to speculate, Harnad now feels that it's wrong for anyone else to speculate. (To quote: "I have learned, though, and no longer speculate. When will WC learn?") He's appalled at the thought that libraries might cancel subscriptions to journals before their contents are fully available in OA. Perhaps UK academic libraries have infinite funding for STM subscriptions, unlike places such as Harvard and the University of California where the situation is known to be untenable.

I offered another brief response—noting that I'll always engage in modest speculation: "Looking toward future scenarios with significant possibilities of becoming real is, I believe, an essential aspect of evaluating current situations—and, ideally, trying to avoid the most negative future scenarios."

As to my learning from reading SH's work for many years, I said, "Have I learned from SH's work? Sure. Does that mean I'm convinced by everything he says? No. If that's the definition of 'learned,' then I'm incorrigible. Sorry." To my surprise and pleasure, the exchange stopped at that point and people moved on to *real* OA issues.

So why do I call this "The One That Isn't Here"? Because this is far from a full recounting of the feedback and followup. I'm tempted—believe me, I'm tempted—but it would be a distraction. I also decided *not* to include dozens of pages of SOAF printouts in this issue's LIBRARY ACCESS TO SCHOLARSHIP section because they are list postings and because adding appropriate commentary would make the section that much longer.

I wonder what SH makes of the third Rumsfeldian line in my August 19 response—the statement that I don't believe others should necessarily have the same primary interests that I do? Is it a weakness of character?

During the interchange, SH noted that he'd done a look back at his original "subversive proposal" after ten years. You can find his essay at www.ecs.soton.ac.uk/~harnad/Hypermail/Amsci/3809.html. It's an interesting read. I now recognize one reason he made me uneasy from the get-go: His insistence (at the time) that getting rid of *print* was key to solving access problems. (He called the demise of paper publishing "the inevitable day" and in several other places blamed print for getting in the way of access.) He called (and calls) all expenses connected with building, maintaining and providing access to institutional archives "minimal" and included his oft-repeated assertion that the total costs of electronic-only publishing would be less than 25% of print-publishing costs. I won't go through a full review; it's only a seven-page listing.

I have never argued against OAI institutional archiving. I have, in fact, devoted a "Crawford Files" column to publicizing a way to make such archiving more accessible to students and scholars. But I don't toe SH's party line, and that's a problem for him. It seems a shame.

GoDVD! and DMCA

INTERESTING & PECULIAR PRODUCTS in *Cites & Insights* 4:12 ended with an item on the Sima GoDVD!, a box that "enhances" analog video so you can convert it to digital form to burn to DVD—and in the process apparently undoes Macrovision copy protection. I noted that Macrovision's president had suggested that GoDVD! violates DMCA and commented "but that's the wrong law: GoDVD! operates entirely in the analog domain, and VHS is an analog medium, so DMCA simply doesn't apply."

Seth Finkelstein, who reads more of the law than I ever will, corrected that sentence. Section 1201k of

DMCA relates to "Certain Analog Devices and Certain Technological Measures," and is in effect a provision that protects Macrovision copy protection, called "automatic gain control copy control technology" in the law. It outlaws manufacture, import, offering to the public, providing or otherwise trafficking in VHS VCRs, 8mm analog camcorders, Beta VCRs, 8mm analog VCRs if they ever become popular (sell 20,000 copies in a calendar year in the U.S.), or any other analog VCR using NTSC format.

My sentence was wrong—but it can still be argued that GoDVD! doesn't violate DMCA. After all, it isn't a VCR or a camcorder; it's just a video enhancement box.

An Apologetic Note

If you sent me feedback that you expected to see here—and *especially* if I asked for, and received, permission to use it (*I always ask*), and if you haven't seen it, well, I probably mislaid it. Sorry. Send it again, if you think it's still remotely relevant or interesting. You can include an explicit "OK to publish" if you want to save the confirmation.

Perspectives

Three Brief Pieces

Some clippings just call for essays—but some essays are too short or disorganized for separate PERSPECTIVES and too long for bullet points in TRENDS & QUICK TAKES. The list of essay topics is growing faster than time to do fully baked commentaries. So here we are: Three topics that fall somewhere in the middle. (There were four, but one essay grew long enough to split out as a separate PERSPECTIVE.) If you can decipher a common theme, let me know: I'll publish it and congratulate you for your ingenuity.

When Standards Die

Many years ago, people might reasonably have assumed that I was deeply involved with standards, and specifically with the National Information Standards Organization (NISO). After all, my first book was about one specific standard (Z39.2 and the MARC formats that are based on it) and my second was *Technical Standards: An Introduction for Librarians*. The first two speeches I ever gave within the library field were on standards (in 1979 and 1987, respectively); my first official role within LITA was as a member and later chair of TESLA, the Technical Standards for Library Automation Committee; and I was the founding editor of *Information Standards Quarterly*, NISO's quarterly publication.

Oddly enough, I've never been heavily involved in the actual standards process. RLG has been and continues to be, within NISO (RLG is an active voting member), the Unicode Consortium (as a founding member) and in other areas. I've mostly observed, appreciated standards, used them and written about them.

Perhaps as a result of my indirect role in standards, I found it interesting to look at one particular page on the NISO website: Withdrawn NISO standards. (www.niso.org/standards/withdrawn.html). There are always some standards that don't see much use, for a variety of reasons. If standards receive so little use that they don't deserve the name "standard," they should be withdrawn the next time they're up for reaffirmation.

Here's the list:
➢ NISO Z39.44-1986 Serial Holdings Statement
➢ Z39.45-1983 Claims for missing issues of serials
➢ NISO Z39.57-1989 Holdings Statements for Non-Serial Items
➢ ANSI/NISO Z39.58-1992 Common Command Language for Online Interactive Information Retrieval
➢ Z39.59 Electronic Manuscript Preparation and Markup
➢ ANSI/NISO Z39.66-1992 Durable Hardcover Binding for Books

I don't know the stories behind each of those withdrawals. The varying prefixes have to do with NISO's history, I believe—e.g., Z39.45 was never renewed after ASC Z39 become NISO, and two other standards were last renewed before the "ANSI/NISO" combination was initiated. The story behind Z39.59 is probably fascinating, but it's someone else's story.

What hit me was the one in the middle: ANSI/NISO Z39.58-1992, the Common Command Language for Online Interactive Information Retrieval. I remember when NISO was polled for withdrawal; I remember agreeing that RLG should support withdrawal. I also remember just a twinge of sadness—balanced by the recognition that history simply passed Z39.58 by.

Z39.58 grew out of frustration with the diverse command syntaxes used in the many online catalogs available in the early 1980s and before. NISO appointed a committee in 1984 to prepare a standard command language; drafts of Z39.58 were available as early as 1986, although the standard was not adopted until 1992. I wrote about Z39.58 as a possibly-desirable standard in *Patron Access: Issues for Online Catalogs* (1987) and described the standard in the second edition of *Technical Standards: An Introduc-*

tion for Librarians (1991), where I related it to the "West Coast group" of oline catalogs—RLIN/BALLOTS, MELVYL, ORION, CARLYLE, and more recent catalogs elsewhere. If you're old enough, you'll recognize the syntax: one-word commands that can be abbreviated to three or fewer characters, frequently followed by one or more specifications. DISplay 1-3 SHOrt; FINd AU eliot AND TI CATS; SHOw NEWs—all Z39.58 statements. The telnet version of Eureka (introduced in 1992) adhered to Z39.58 as closely as possible; NOTIS explicitly followed Z39.58. I devoted a brief chapter in *The Online Catalog Book: Essays and Examples* (1992) to "Common User Access and Common Command Language," noting how long it had taken for Z39.58/CCL to gain approval and the likelihood that it would be widely supported. (Common User Access? That's IBM's name for the general design principles embodied in the early Mac, Windows 3, and a number of DOS programs such as MS Word 5.5, Quattro Pro, and Ventura Publisher for DOS. Some of CUA survives today in the toolbars at the top of every program, in somewhat different form.)

So what happened to CCL? The Web. CCL was a *command* language. If people didn't understand it, you could provide a set of possibilities—and if they didn't state it right, you could offer context-sensitive possibilities or take "do what I mean" actions.

As it turns out, you *eliminate* almost all of that confusion within a true Web interface, between radio buttons, pull-down menus, and the other tools of a graphical user interface. After all, a user can't misspell a command verb if it's one of several buttons or choices on a pull-down list. It also turned out that you didn't really need 27 different choices for actions to take all the time; in most cases, a small handful of probable actions (with some secondary actions provided elsewhere in the interface) serve users better and reduce confusion further.

Some of us still miss command-line interfaces. Phantoms of CCL/Z39.58 still exist within command-line search options, which are likely to be with us for years (they really are faster for many expert searchers). Some of us have moved on.

I shed no tears for Z39.58. It's a shame it took so long to design and ratify, but it was a useful standard for the early 1990s. Technology made it largely superfluous; that happens sometimes.

Blogging and Enthusiasm

Back in May 2004, *Library Juice* included a Rory Litwin essay with some negative comments about library weblogs and "irrational excitement about the web in general." Anna Creech, the *eclectic librarian*, posted a thoughtful essay, "What's wrong with a

little enthusiasm?" I set that aside, intending to comment in a brief essay. It's taken a while.

Litwin called blogging "a craze in its current form" and said many people were starting blogs "for no discernible reason." He offered this indictment:

> Many people are now using the blog format where a chronological organization is not appropriate to the content they are putting up, for no other reason than that blogs are hot and there are services supporting them. This is irrational. I feel that librarians should be a little more mature and less inclined to fall for Internet crazes like this. That is not to say that a blog is never a useful thing, only that blogs—as everything on the web—should be seen for what they are and not in terms of a pre-existing condition.

I don't have a blog, I don't think I *should* have a blog, and I'm a grouchy old traditionalist, called a Luddite (and worse) by some. I was irritated by the seeming calls that everyone should have a blog and the specific suggestions that I should start a blog; I still believe that some weblog advocates oversell their advantages.

That said, I find I'm on Creech's side here. There's nothing wrong with a little enthusiasm. I count on younger and more enthusiastic librarians to pursue some ideas that I don't pay attention to; maybe I'll learn to love them later. Or maybe I won't: Even younger librarians wind up abandoning some portion of their enthusiasms.

Creech notes that Litwin didn't offer specific examples of weblogs in cases where reverse-chronological order isn't appropriate. She does that, noting a reference situation where an FAQ notebook has become a weblog. She thinks something like a wiki might make more sense—or, for that matter, a plain old FAQ might be right. But as she says, "I am confident that eventually they will move on to some other format that better serves their needs, and in the meantime, they will have become familiar with yet another piece of modern technology."

I'll agree with Creech that it's important for (some) librarians to try (some) new things. I disagree with those (Creech isn't one) who seem to think we should *all* try every fad that comes down the road—and if you asked me to name such a technophile evangelist, I'd be hard pressed right now.

I believe that most librarians have neither the time nor the need to try every shiny new thing—but I also believe that it helps the profession if *some* people have the enthusiasm to do so, particularly if they're also realistic enough to spot the problems. That's a tough combination, but the idea-and-response nature of the *web* of library-related weblogs (and related stuff) tends to make it more likely.

The thing that bothers me most about weblogs is the seeming need to coin new terms at the drop of an idea. But I use some of those terms, not always

derisively. I read weblogs; I still find some of them to be valuable sources.

I've made fun of Jenny Levine a lot and Steven Cohen a little. Chances are, I'll do so in the future. I also respect what both of them bring to the party. We can't all explore every new thing; we can learn from those who do. I'm not as enthusiastic about *anything* as I used to be, I suspect, and that may be the most negative consequence of getting older. I appreciate the enthusiasm of others, particularly when they're willing to consider the possibility that they've gone overboard (and I *definitely* include Levine and Cohen in the category of those willing to consider such possibilities). Without enthusiasm and the willingness to explore new avenues that might or might not succeed, the field will stagnate.

Of course, I could just point you to the May 28, 2004 entry at www.eclecticlibrarian.net and say, "I agree, at least mostly."

Does the Music Matter?

Rogier Van Bakel wrote an odd essay in the New York *Times* on July 17: "Can an MP3 glutton savor a tune?" He notes, "Almost everyone knows hundreds of recordings that are time machines"—songs that resonate within you, bringing back memories at the deepest level. "By virtue of repetition over weeks or months, music can become a soundtrack for a particular time in your life."

He notes that music fans can now "indulge boundless appetites" and—even legally—expand their collections at relatively little cost. "But with so much worthwhile music pouring into my computer and from there into my iPod, none of it seems quite as long-lasting or momentous as the old tunes. I'll come across sets of MP3s I have no recollection of having downloaded just weeks earlier."

When he was a student and money was tight, "virtually every album I bought came to stand for something." After seven or eight years, he had 150 to 200 albums—2,000 songs, more or less. "I own a hundred times that much music these days. Question is, was I somehow getting more out of my tunes when all my albums fit into a duffel bag?"

He believes that's true. He thinks it makes sense to buy two or three CDs (or download a short playlist) and let them sink in before you go on to more.

I see his point, although my situation is a little different. As a student and shortly thereafter, I was a little music-crazy: not only pop, folk and rock, but also even more baroque and 20th century classical. At one point, I owned every album of Stravinsky conducted by Stravinsky except for one TV ballet, "The Flood," that was apparently in print for an hour and a half. I was buying the Telefunken Bach extravaganza as it came out, pocket scores and all. I think I hit 1,300 albums—all in great shape, and not played all that often even if I did spend *way* too much time just sitting and listening.

Then I got a life. Tastes, desires, and time changed. I sold most of the collection before CDs came along; the rest went when I converted. At this point, we own something like 150 CDs (and a few dozen classical CDs that don't contain "songs")—in other words, we're about where Van Bakel was as a student. I mostly listen to CD-Rs drawn from a subset of the CDs, most of which I've ripped (at high bitrates) to MP3 and reconvert to CD audio when burning. I make up mixes for various reasons, one of them being to approach songs freshly.

A few dozen songs bring back history. A few hundred are memorable from my past. A surprising number are memorable from more recent times because the music resonates with my feelings. I've thought about the possibility of *really* restoring the old songs I liked—probably roughly doubling our collection—and adding some new ones. And I realize that I'd rather explore the 1,500-odd selected songs, at least for a few months.

Is it possible that having all the music you could ever want means that none of it matters as much? Is this another unintended consequence of technology: Cheapening the emotional impact of music by making it so much more available?

I think Van Bakel may be on to something. I'd like to believe otherwise. The music should matter, just as certain books and certain movies (and maybe even certain TV shows) should touch us more deeply than "Oh, I liked that well enough."

Masthead

URL: cites.boisestate.edu/civ4i13.pdf