Cites & Insights

Crawford at Large

Libraries • Policy • Technology • Media

Sponsored by YBP Library Services

Volume 6, Number 14: December 2006 ISSN 1534-0937 Walt Crawford

Perspective

The Lazy Man's Guide to Productivity

Once in a while someone asks me, "How do you do all that writing on your own time? Do you ever sleep?" Those questions arose more often when I was doing three columns (two monthly) as well as *C&I*, but they still comes up. Recently, a colleague convinced me that they deserved more than my usual one-sentence answer to the first:

I'm lazy but I'm efficient.

That's always been my answer. It's true and relevant. The tough part was what followed. "I do almost all that writing in an hour or so every weekday and three or four hours each weekend."

Looking back, I'm not sure how I *did* manage to write three columns and a monthly journal, a few speeches each year, even a book and briefer book-type project in that amount of time. Maybe I've grown less efficient or a bit slower, but it all sounds improbable.

"Lazy but efficient" may be snappy but it's less than useful. So, since you (at least one of you) asked for a longer answer, here's more about how I manage.

Starting Points

I am lazy, at least compared to some dynamos I know—and I most definitely sleep. Most evenings I'm gone by 10 p.m., and I don't get up until around 5:30 on weekdays, an hour later on weekends. I don't envy those who claim to get by just fine on five hours a night. I don't try to get by without a full night's sleep.

We also watch TV for an hour or so most nights. I also read: Lots of magazines (too many magazines), the local daily newspaper, books (mostly from the library) now and then. And, to be sure, raw material for my writing: a *lot* of that—annotating while I'm reading. On the other hand, I don't have any hobbies other than writing, music (mix CD-Rs and listening) and reading. And travel, if that's a hobby.

Working Habits

When I get home from work (work 7 a.m. to 4 p.m.), I exercise on the treadmill while watching old movies (longtime readers know about that from OFFTOPIC PERSPECTIVES), shower, check the mail, then—on most days—sit down at my desk to write. Usually, that means writing from around 5:15 to around 6:30. I may come back to the computer after dinner for another hour or so—but there are days when I can't face writing or need to take care of chores. I probably average four days a week, but that means some weeks where I get no writing done and other weeks where I write every day. I usually manage an hour on Saturday morning, maybe an hour or two Saturday afternoon, and *sometimes* two or three hours on Sunday.

Inside This Issue

Here are a few elements of "efficient"—how I manage to get a lot done in a modest amount of time:

- **Deadlines:** When I had lots of them, I started a rolling three-month (printed) spreadsheet—two sets of two columns each, one with dates and one with deadlines and "prep days" (seven days for each deadline and slack days when feasible), with a fifth column summarizing deadlines over the next year or so. I include vacation time, conferences, and other interruptions on that spreadsheet (I don't write when I'm traveling). I cross out each day as I come to it—but I also cross out prep

days and deadlines when I get ahead, and I try to be ahead at least four days. Why? Because I always assumed that if I ever missed a deadline, the whole set would come crashing down and I'd never recover. My editors can tell you the results: I've never missed a deadline (except once, with substantial advance notice), and I usually submit my stuff way ahead. There aren't as many deadlines now, but the spreadsheet still helps—even though "slack" days don't take into account the fact that it's not possible to write, edit, and publish *C&I* in seven after-work sessions.

- **Creative procrastination:** My favorite way to deal with writer's block is also my favorite way to get things done when I'm trying to *avoid* getting them done. I can put off writing a column by writing a PERSPECTIVE for *C&I*. I can put off a *C&I* essay by writing a *different* C&I essay or a column. And so on… Some times, I just need to let the "procrastinated" project work itself out in my hindbrain for a few days. Some times, it turns out I really didn't want to write about X after all. Meanwhile, I've probably completed Y and Z. This only works if you have a few things going simultaneously—but I don't claim *any* of this will work for other people.
- **A place to write and writing in its place:** I have a big old L-shaped computer desk. At the corner are my display, speakers, wireless keyboard, and wireless mouse (and current schedule spreadsheet and this week's task list). Working papers and stuff to the left; "other stuff" and my multifunction printer to the right. Good desk chair. *No distractions*. When I turn on the equipment and sit down, I'm determined to get something done.
- **Focus and mindfulness (unitasking):** I don't believe in multitasking in general—but in my case, it's worse than usual. I'd *love* to listen to music while I'm writing but I usually can't. When I listen to music, I *listen* to music. That causes me to lose focus on what I'm writing. I don't claim my writing is wonderful; I do claim it would be worse as well as slower if I didn't focus on writing *and only writing*.
- **Through writing:** Ideally, I write the first draft of each "disContent" column in a single session. That's also true for most shorter essays and some medium-length essays in *Cites & Insights*. For essays longer than 2,000 words or so, I try to completing each section in one pass. It doesn't always work, and I find myself moving sections around and finding new overall stories for chunks of material I've been working on, but I'm a great believer in through writing for shorter essays. You gain coherence and stylistic consistency, and with luck there's a freshness to through-written stories that's less likely with stuff assembled over several days.
- **One point five drafts:** What I do *not* do, if I can avoid it, is let badly-flawed material go on the assumption that it's just a first draft and I can fix it in revisions. Il fix it on the spot if that's possible. I don't plan for multiple drafts. Most of *Cites & Insights* is basically 1.5-draft material: A clean first draft and a relatively brief editing pass unless I recognize that something's badly wrong. "disContent" may get two drafts, but now that it's down to 800 words, the second draft rarely takes more than half an hour to complete.
- **Touch typing:** Touch typing? Of course (70wpm after corrections, last time I checked)—but even two-finger typing's fast enough to do the thousand words an hour I aim for. That's just 16.7 words per minute. The virtue of touch typing is that you're not spending mental energy on mechanics: As far as I'm concerned, the words flow directly from the brain to the screen.
- **Integrated formatting:** For *Cites & Insights* and most booklength projects, I know I'll be preparing the final formatted copy—and I do that *as I'm writing*. I prepared a "cites.dot" template carefully to make *Cites & Insights* look the way I want. I keep that template visible and assign styles to headings and other elements as I'm writing. Once I've done an editing pass, the essay is ready to drop into the publication.
- **Realistic expectations:** I'm not looking for a Pulitzer. I already have a couple of lesser writing awards. I almost never write scholarly papers and don't consider myself a scholar. I've deliberately adopted a straightforward prose style, one that matches my speaking style. I know my writing can always stand improve-

ment (and love it when good editors take advantage of that), but I also know my writing's usually clear and readable. I don't spend a lot of time polishing the burlap of my prose. Maybe I should spend more, but when I've done that in the past, the results were more precise but less interesting, even to me.

- **Experience**: I've been writing for a long time. That first article was an ordeal, as was the first booklength manuscript (never published) and the first published book. The first non-scholarly article was easier because it was conversational—and, little by little, I've developed a methodology that works. For me.

That's some of what works for me. It might or might not work for you.

Cheating and Caveats

That may still leave the question, "How do you get all that stuff done in so little time?" The answer is, at least sometimes, that I don't.

I cheat.

Until September 2005, that meant using vacation time now and then to catch up on projects or get ahead. Not most of my vacation time—that goes to *real* vacations. But I got more vacation time than my wife did, and neither of us could schedule all of our vacation each year, so half a day every couple of months was OK.

In September 2005, both of us got cut back to three-quarter time. From then through June 2006, I had *plenty* of time for writing and being even lazier. Two extra hours a day makes a load of difference. I don't know: Does *C&I* for October 2005 through July 2006 appear better or more interesting than what comes before or after?

When I changed employers and my wife became a part-time contractor, I returned to full time. Since then? I write after dinner a little more often than I used to. I'm spending a lot less time organizing mix CD-Rs and enjoying music than I used to, unfortunately. Book projects keep looking good (I have five in mind right now), but keep looking harder to pull off. And I still may use a half day of vacation once in a while, if it's necessary.

I've always "cheated" by thinking about what I want to write when I'm doing something else—driving, reading, watching TV, taking breaks at work.

Caveats? Most of them have already appeared. My writing isn't as good as it possibly could be and probably should be. I don't claim these techniques will work for others. You may find music makes you more productive (but I'd try it both ways!). You may find it better to write in bits and pieces on some portable device whenever you have a break. You might prefer the traditional theme-outline-expansion-rewrite cycle (I used to use outlines, but I also used to do a lot less writing). *ACRLog* has recommended some essays on writing; they didn't work for me, but they might be just the thing for you.

What works for me may not work for you. But now you know more about just what it is that **does** work for me. Ask me again in five or six years, when I have more time—and when I may have even more things to be lazy about.

Net Media Perspective
"C&I is Not a Blog"

This is the "other half" of the NET MEDIA feature for November—the part that didn't fit because there was too much to say about *Wikipedia* and *Citizendium*. Since the last roundup on blogging (NET MEDIA in *C&I* 6.6), I've accumulated several items on blogging that I believe are worth comment.

Why the title? Because that's a comment I *used* to make once in a while, when someone included *Cites & Insights* in a list of blogs or called it a blog. The only things *C&I* has in common with blogs are that it's published on the web and it's typically written by one person. It's not a series of entries that appear in reverse chronological order. It's fundamentally PDF, which is *entirely* foreign to the nature of blogs.

I don't think I've heard this ejournal mislabeled as a blog for more than a year. That could be because I also have a blog, but I think it's because bloggers and the people who read them have become more conscious of the multiplicity of forms. Wikis aren't blogs. Blogs aren't ejournals. Ejournals aren't portals. The "read/write web" is more than blogs.

First up, metablogging—blogs on blogs.

Blogs and discourse

Redhaired future librarian asks a provocative question in this July 25, 2006 post:

> Are blogs really good for two-way communication? I'm starting to suspect no.
>
> I belong to a forum of people who have only one thing in common. We represent a wide range of political beliefs, religious beliefs, ethnicities, and gender identities.

> Somehow, on this forum, we are able to have real discussions, including disagreements. People still generally respect each other while engaging in dialogue.

Redhaired used to blog "when Blogger was still brand new." Back then, "people were willing to disagree with each other, while respecting each other's rights to have an opinion." But a change happened—in Redhaired's opinion, because of the 2000 election and September 11. Redhaired quit blogging a few months after September 11 "because of the hostile atmosphere."

> I don't see discourse any more in blogs. With a few exceptions, the blogs I have come across tend to have commenters who always agree with the main post. Commenters who do not agree are ignored, dismissed, or treated as if they're attacking the original poster. (Ignored is more common.) That's if a person who disagrees even bothers to post a comment. There seems to be an intolerance for people with different opinions and priorities.

Redhaired wonders whether it's the medium, whether "people who like to pontificate and be agreed with are drawn to blogging," and how this "seeming lack of tolerance for differing opinions and priorities translate[s] to real-life librarian work." The post ends:

> Can blogs be used for true two-way communication?

My answer to Redhaired's question is a qualified **Yes**. It is possible to have conversations in blogs. Most libloggers welcome civil disagreement and attempt to respond to it; I've seen few exceptions.

Most library blogs don't get very many comments and a few blogs tend to have mostly comments that agree with the posts. When I sense that a blogger tends to mistreat those who disagree with the blogger, I don't post comments.

For this year's study of liblogs, the media comments per post was only 0.42. Most blogs had less than half a comment per post but more than a dozen averaged at least three comments per post. The high-reach blogs in the 2005 study had a median of only half a comment per post, but five showed more than three comments per post.

Yes, conversations are possible. Yes, it's possible to disagree and still show mutual respect, at least on most liblogs. But blogs are *not* ideal conversational media and I don't think that's likely to change.

Blogging confusion

Iris at *Pegasus librarian* posted this on August 6, 2006, beginning: "Funny to admit this nearly 150 posts into my blog, but I really don't know what I'm doing." Excerpting from the post:

> I've read a few posts in the last few months about what should and should not be blogged, and I've begun to learn the art of linking in context. But then I hear of people promising not to talk about personal, political, religious, or off-topic stuff. (I can say from experience that it's hard to be off-topic when there's no defined topic, but this breaks the cardinal rule of blogging: build yourself a niche and write to that niche.) I've heard that people prefer short posts (hmmm, I'm not always very good at that one)…
>
> Even so, I often find myself wondering whether a particular post is "appropriate" for this blog, or I visit someone else's blog and see the skill that can only come from experience, and I have to admit that I'm utterly clueless. I can't even define "appropriate" posts for myself, so how can I be expected to make consistent decisions?...
>
> I've begun to realize that blogging, like letter writing, is an art as much as a skill….All I can say is that I'll keep writing and learning.

This post *requires* disagreement, for a different reason: Iris writes well and writes about interesting things. *Pegasus librarian* is one of several dozen blogs where a Bloglines "new post" flag is a delight. I know I won't be preached at but may get a new, refreshing, and different viewpoint; I know Iris won't be doing echo posts; I know she cares about what she says.

Iris got several comments beginning with this gem from Joshua M. Neff:

> Eh, niche, schniche. I think you should write about whatever you feel like writing about. I mean, if you don't write about it, who will? People are under no obligation to read what you write, but you're under no obligation to write what people expect to read.

Here's my own comment:

> I seem to be offering variations on this comment various places, but:
>
> Here's what I believe the **New Rules for Worthwhile Blogging** to be:
>
> 1. Post about what matters to you. That's likely to change over time.
>
> 2. Post when you have something to say.
>
> 3. Take as many words to say it as it needs.
>
> 4. Think for a couple of seconds about what you're about to release to humanity in general--butbdon't obsess over it.
>
> 5. Don't worry about huge readership, a niche, or anything else. Do what you're doing and the right readers will find you.
>
> Sez I, who found you a while back.

I left out the last sentence of the original post, the one that tells me *Pegasus Librarian* will continue to be an interesting, worthwhile blog: "Tips would be appreciated, though I reserve the right to disregard them entirely." As I would never in my life say, "You go, girl!"

Closing up shop

Michael Yunkin posted this on August 30, 2006 at *digitize everything*—but you may have trouble finding it. I'm including it as a bit of blog and wiki history, one of the cases in which someone states eloquently why a project is being abandoned.

The blog name pushed one of my buttons, particularly the motto "Helping dig the grave of all things analog," but I took it semi-facetiously and found Yunkin's rare posts worth reading. Yunkin's site also had a wiki, Digiwik, created as "a tool that would be useful for the digitization community, would allow me to learn what others are accomplishing in the field, would help me answer my own questions about digitization, and as an added bonus, would give me a chance to learn how to run a website."

While Yunkin says it was somewhat successful on the last two points, it failed on the first. There was a great deal of initial interest—but very few contributions to the wiki. He sees three reasons: Members of the community are *all* looking for answers and may not feel "expert" enough to contribute; many questions are easily answered, and tough questions have different answers at every institution; people may not have *time* to work on a shared wiki. Or maybe the wiki needed higher-profile sponsorship.

Whatever the reasons, the wiki never took off. "Digiwik is closing up shop. $50 a month is too much to host a tool that's of use to so few." Yunkin's own work is moving away from digitization initiatives, so the blog also makes less sense.

Yunkin's right in saying that a digitization wiki could benefit from case studies and reviews of specific projects. That's what we need in *all* areas, and it's the kind of thing wikis can do well and traditional publishing does badly: Lots of searchable "what we did and what we learned" cases, including those that succeed, those that fail, and those in the middle.

Library blogs

I'm commenting less on stuff from within OCLC because I now work there; that makes my comments prone to perceptions of conflict of interest. There are always exceptions.

Alane posted this on September 20, 2006 at *It's all good*, starting with a joke "because there is a dearth of humour in most library blogs." After the joke, Alane proceeds:

> I've spent some time rummaging around the wiki Amanda Etches-Johnson built that lists blogs by libraries and library directors. I did not look at every entry but I looked at lots. A few words sum up my impressions. Earnest, dry, not regularly updated, without personality. You get my drift. In fact, some aren't really blogs, in my opinion, because commenting is turned off.

I disagree with Alane on the final sentence: Blogs without comments may not be conversations, but they're certainly blogs. I spend most of my time on "personal" liblogs, so I'm not in a position to refute what she says. A fair number of blogs by library *people* have some humor, but that's a different issue. Alane mentions exceptions such as blogs from Kansas State, Oberlin College, Archdale Public and West Palm Beach public. The real reason I'm commenting on Alane's post comes in the last three paragraphs, quoted here in full:

> There's no reason at all that library blogs have to be impersonal and dry. Think about your own favourite blogs to read and visit...I'll bet they are compelling and interesting not because of a steady (or not so steady stream) of facts but because they entertain as well as inform, and because there's a human voice.
>
> Consider this anecdote from the voice behind the McMaster U Lib blog, University Librarian, Jeffery Trzeciak. He's writing about meeting a student who thanked him for blogging: "He encouraged me to write more frequently and I mentioned how I wanted to take the time to carefully consider each post. His response: just write about what you're doing--say something about a book you're reading. It doesn't always have to be 'big thoughts.' You know...he's right. People crave communication. It doesn't always have to be the 'big issues' but it should be heartfelt."
>
> Ya gotta have heart if you blog...having a blog for your library that is boring and heartless is not good marketing. It suggests your library is too.

I wholeheartedly agree. Blogs-as-marketing are tricky business and a "blog to have a blog" is likely to fail, but a *good* blog as honest communication can be an effective way to tell a library's story better ("marketing" with a less mercantile name).

A hand in the blog is worth…

Joshua M. Neff, October 13, 2006, *The goblin in the library*: "I've been blogging for 5 years now, and I've only just started to really think about why." Neff thinks you need a good reason to blog in 2006 (and didn't in 2001), and elaborates on his own reasons and reasons for libraries to blog.

He started because he got egged on by others and had creative writing he wanted to post, and at the time a blog was the easiest way to do that. Now?

> Where blogs really shine is in the pairing of posts and comments. Like peanut butter and jelly, blog posts and

> comments are a delicious and delightful combination, and one is not nearly as good without the other. When you have blog posts and comments, you don't just get to publish your blatherings, you get feedback from friends and strangers. You get *conversations*. Ephemeral, yet archived and preserved for posterity, conversations. I'm something of a nut for conversations. And you get these posts and conversations delivered in a hot-off-the-presses fashion…
>
> What does this mean for libraries? Blogs are immediate conversations between the library and the public, ephemeral but preserved. Wow! You can have conversations with your public face-to-face, over the telephone, through snailmail and email and instant messaging. With blogs, you can have conversations that are preserved and on display, immediate and eternal, like a fly in amber.
>
> And what does this mean for me? I get to have immediate, ephemeral, preserved conversations with friends, with family, with fellow librarians who I've never met face-to-face. It's something I love to do, and blogs are the tops for that.

This post received exactly one comment—but that's neither here nor there. If you see a resonance with Alane's post, it's there: Neff also seems to believe that library blogs *should* enable comments to make them conversations—and, I'll infer, that the best library blogs are conversational in tone.

Joshua M. Neff and I disagree at times. This is **not** one of them.

Categories and Lists

I may not like manifestos but who doesn't like lists? Here we have four metablogs, three with numbered lists, one with categories. I found them all interesting, entertaining, and at least partly true.

Top 10 signs you might be addicted to blogging

This is third-hand: I picked it up in a May 28, 2006 post by Judith Siess at *OPL plus*, quoting a May 23, 2006 post by Ann Handley and David Armano at *Marketing profs: Daily fix*. I'm omitting some of the commentary.

> 10. You check your blog stats a LOT…
>
> 9. Your significant other suspects you are having an affair with your blog…
>
> 8. You "mental blog" while driving or on the train, and sometimes even when you are alone in the shower.
>
> 7. You filter everything through your post-writing…
>
> 6. You suffer from "blog envy" when another blogger posts something juicy before you do. You suffer "comment envy" when said post gets 40-something comments – the jerk!
>
> 5. You "binge blog" 3 or 4 posts at once—only to feel guilty and empty afterward.
>
> 4. You ditched all your real friends for blog friends, because, well, "they understand."
>
> 3. You think, "I can stop at any time."
>
> 2. Your lunch hour has become your "blog hour." You keep a few posts tucked in your desk in case you need them during the day.
>
> 1. After 5 minutes of meeting someone really interesting you ask, "So, do you blog?"

Why blog post frequency does not matter anymore

Speaking of *Marketing profs: Daily fix* (blog.marketingprofs.com), here's one by Eric Kintz on June 6, 2006. Starting with the common wisdom:

> "Thou shall post every day" is the most fundamental and most well known principle of blogging....
>
> Every new blogger is warned about "the" ultimate rule and is confronted with the pressure of a day going by with no new post.

Kintz (a VP at HP) offers ten reasons why that's no longer true unless you're anxious to join the A-list. These are mostly the topic sentences; Kintz offers a clear paragraph expanding on each one. You already know I agree that high frequency is no longer a necessary aspect of *personal* blogs, so let's just say "I agree."

> 1. Traffic is generated by participating in the community, not daily posting…Daily posting deals with the clutter by adding more clutter.
>
> 2. Traffic is irrelevant to your blog's success anyway.
>
> 3. Loyal readers coming back daily to check your posts is so Web 1.0…Loyal readers subscribe to your blog via RSS feeds…
>
> 4. Frequent posting is actually starting to have a negative impact on loyalty… [According to] Seth Godin…RSS fatigue is already setting in.
>
> 5. Frequent posting keeps key senior executives and thought leaders out of the blogosphere.
>
> 6. Frequent posting drives poor content quality.
>
> 7. Frequent posting threatens the credibility of the blogosphere.
>
> 8. Frequent posting will push corporate bloggers into the hands of PR agencies.
>
> 9. Frequent posting creates the equivalent of a blogging landfill.
>
> 10. I love my family too much.

The comments—loads of them—are fascinating.

List of things bloggers should understand

Here's another third-hand case: Angel of *The itinerant librarian* (his other blog) posted a list of "9 things

every blogger should understand" from Aaron B. Hockley, *Another blogger* (www.anotherblogger.com), and added Angel's own comments

Herewith, five of the nine—with portions of Angel's comments (in italics):

1. Every reader has an opinion… and they're all correct in their own mind.

2. Posting the same things as everyone else will render you invisible.

3. The corollary to the previous item: posting unique content is the way to get noticed. *[While not looking to get noticed,] I see no point in blogging about something that the rest of the biblioblogosphere has beaten to a pulp.*

4. It is better to have your controversial posts read by folks who disagree with you than those who are on your side.

5. Only a very small percentage of your readers will leave comments…

Annoyed librarian library blog taxonomy

You should take this as seriously as everything else at *Annoyed librarian* (where this appeared on July 17, 2006)—and that's a tricky comment, I'm afraid. Once again, I'll just give the taxonomy; AL provides hypothetical quotes from a post in each category—some of the hypotheticals a bit less blind than others.

Library Blog as Personal Diary

Library Blog as Personal Diary Written by Andy Rooney

Library Blog as Professional Therapy

Library Blog as Personal Cry for Help

Library Blog as Pathetic Cry for Attention

Library Blog as Counter-Librarian Blog

Library Blog as Professional Self-promotion

Library Blog as Serious Library Report

Library Blog as Witty Library Report

Library Blog as Book Review Medium

Library Blog as Book Free Zone

Library Blog as Librarian Cheerleader

Library Blog as Cynical Library Critic

Library Blog as Informative Library Analysis

Library Blog as Unpaid Technology Advertising

Library Blog as Informative Technology Selection Tool

Library Blog as Future Manifesto

Library Blog as Business Manifesto

Library Blog as Left-wing Propaganda

Library Blog as Right-wing Propaganda

Library Blog as Fair and Balanced Political Analysis

Library Blog as Inoffensive Satire

Library Blog as Offensive Satire

You say you don't recognize your blog on that list? **Are you sure?**

Full disclosure: AL references my blog posts on the way to the "Great Middle" survey—and, as I commented, this post helped convince me to avoid either taxonomy or folksonomy within the survey.

Popular and Informal Articles

Spam + blogs = trouble

Charles C. Mann wrote this, which appeared in the September 2006 *Wired* (and is available from wired.com). It begins oddly:

> I am aware that spending a lot of time Googling yourself is kind of narcissistic, OK? But there are situations, I would argue, when it is efficiently—even forgivably—narcissistic. When I published a book last year, I wanted to know what, if anything, people were saying about it. Ego-surfing was the obvious way to do that. Which is how I stumbled across Some Title.

What I've found is that Googling yourself is pointless once you're even slightly well know—even if you have a distinctive name. Using "Charles C. Mann" (in quotes) shows "about 237,000"—of which 481 are viewable. Expanding the search to show "similar" results, you run into the Google 999-result limit: It is *simply not possible* to see everything that's been said, and Google tends to favor older material. (Even adding "1491," the key word in the book's title, you get "about 171,000," and expanding the 320-odd first result hits the 999-result limit.)

Which doesn't detract from his point: Sooner or later in any sizable result, you reach sites like *Some title*, which "identified itself as a blog but obviously wasn't one." In other words, splogs. I've seen it, you've probably seen it, and it's getting worse.

Mann does a nice job in this article: He does the research and writes well. He found the "author" of *Some title*, who—along with a partner and a few employees—runs either a few thousand splogs or "not *that* many," and who took in at least $71,000 between August and October of 2005. How? Through ad revenue, gained because their sites appear high in search engines—which they do because of link farms and, in some cases, trackbacks.

There may be millions of splogs. They screw up search results; they also siphon off ad revenue that might otherwise go to more content-heavy sites. That's the fault of idiots who click on ads in splogs, of course. Splogs aren't illegal. Unfortunately, some of

the tools used to identify splogs are heavy-handed (one would label *Cites & Insights* as a splog site because of the .info domain). It's an ongoing issue, and most commentators quoted in the article don't think there's any way to handle splogs effectively.

How does the splogger behind Some Title feel about the extent to which splogs might screw up the web in general? "I'm just making my living. I guess I don't think about that kind of thing very much."

At least *Wired* doesn't see this as a promising new business opportunity. I can think of at least one other magazine that might view this as a prospect (see *C&I* 6:9, page 25, bottom right).

The great unread

Nicholas Carr posted this on August 15, 2006 at *Rough type*. He begins with a prelude:

> Once upon a time there was an island named Blogosphere, and at the very center of that island stood a great castle built of stone, and spreading out from that castle for miles in every direction was a vast settlement of peasants who lived in shacks fashioned of tin and cardboard and straw.

I love stories and framing one in traditional storytelling mode is nice. He's discussing "innocent fraud," a term by John Kenneth Galbraith for such euphemisms as "market economy" in place of "capitalism."

> An innocent fraud is a lie, but it's a lie that's more white than black. It's a lie that makes most everyone happy. It suits the purposes of the powerful because it masks the full extent of their power, and it suits the purposes of the powerless because it masks the full extent of their powerlessness.
>
> What we tell ourselves about the blogosphere—that it's open and democratic and egalitarian, that it stands in contrast and in opposition to the controlled and controlling mass media—is an innocent fraud.

As Carr points out, it's not hard to see through innocent frauds including this one. Carr quotes non-A-list bloggers including Seth Finkelstein, who had false hopes about blogging ("delusions of influence") and finds blog evangelism "very cruel, as it preys on people's frustrated hopes and dreams." Carr notes:

> The powerful have a greater stake in the perpetuation of an innocent fraud than do the powerless. Long after the powerless have suspended their suspension of disbelief, the powerful will continue to hold tightly to the fraud, repeating it endlessly amongst themselves in an echo chamber that provides a false ring of truth.

Anybody can become an A-lister. There is no A-list. Any blog can reach a vast audience. You know the myths. Within the broad field of blogs, I no longer have any doubt that they *are* myths. The A-listers play by different rules and mostly draw sycophants as commenters; these days, though, many of the A-list blogs are really just new forms of old or corporate media in any case.

The next section recounts a conference at which an A-list blogger was asked how some other blogger could get a link. The answer's simple: *Write a post referring to the A-lister*, further increasing the A-listers reach and influence. (I'd guess favorable references get more backlinks than disagreements do.)

> As the blogophere has become more rigidly hierarchical, not by design but as a natural consequence of hyperlinking patterns, filtering algorithms, aggregation engines, and subscription and syndication technologies, not to mention human nature, it has turned into a grand system of patronage operated—with the best of intentions, mind you—by a tiny, self-perpetuating elite. A blog-peasant, one of the Great Unread, comes to the wall of the castle to offer a tribute to a royal, and the royal drops a couple of coins of attention into the peasant's little purse. The peasant is happy, and the royal's hold over his position in the castle is a little bit stronger.

In the epilogue, a blog-peasant sees in a crystal an image of a fleet of merchant ships sailing to Blogosphere, with names like Time-Warner and Condé Nast, as blog-peasants jeer and tell invaders they would be vanquished by the royals. But, of course, as the captains arrived at the castle with crates of gold, "they were not repelled by the royals with cannons but rather welcomed with fanfares."

The charming and, for those who *want* influence, all too true story runs 2.5 pages. When I printed it out *the next day*, there were 12 print pages of comments—by September 29, comments totaled roughly 38 pages. I can't summarize them all (nor do I plan to read them all, particularly when an A-lister accuses Carr of "cheating" by using a summary voice instead of loads'o'quotes and links. He doesn't *quite* say straw man, but comes close.

Some people realistically say they aren't looking to route around old media, that they aren't looking for influence: Their blogs serve narrower purposes. (Carr calls this "private blogging" but "niche blogging" is a third area.) That's true for *Walt at random*—but that doesn't negate the truth of Carr's article as it relates to those who buy into the egalitarian myth and *do* want to be heard as "public bloggers." Some of the comments are remarkably self-revealing: One seems to say "oh, nobody really believes those old blog-and-reach-millions stuff anyway" then goes on to report on

"pretty intense discussions" with such everyday people as Jeff Jarvis. Michael Arrington says, "If you find that you are blogging just to get influence and attention, you should stop because you are going to be disappointed." Of course, *nobody* said they were blogging *just* to get influence and attention; the disappointment seems to be that blogging turns out to be no more egalitarian than traditional media, maybe less. It's amusing that as I note Arrington's "write for yourself" comment, I see him smokin' on a fine cigar, money floating down around him, in a full-page illustration for "Blogging for dollars," a *Business 2.0* article about just how much "influence and attention" people like, ahem, Arrington (*TechCrunch)* actually have. He's pulling in $60K in ad revenue *each month* and quit his day job to blog full time—and, by the way, this poor soul can host 500 people at a party in his one-acre backyard in Atherton, one of the priciest enclaves in Silicon Valley. Which brings us to…

Blogging for dollars

Business 2.0, September 2006. "It's not just a hobby—some small sites are making big money. Here's how to turn your passion into an online empire." Right. If you're Michael Arrington, a millionaire with all sorts of insider friends, you can get heavy advertising bucks. If you set out to create hype-and-gossip sites like Gizmodo, Defamer and Wonkette, old media in a new guise, you can rake in the bucks. John Battelle blew it as a print publisher, but he's aggregating a bunch of "A list" blogs to concentrate ad revenue. Here's another genuine alternative media democratic from-the-ground-up effort: PopSugar, "a fast-growing celebrity gossip site." The founder's motto: "We create editorial for an ADD culture."

Sound like blogging to you? In form, yes: Lots of little articles presented in reverse chronological order. But most of these blogs are about as "alternative" as *Time Magazine*: They're deliberately founded with hired bloggers aiming to attract the largest number of eyeballs to sell ads. If there ever was a revolution, it's been nicely co-opted.

Your chances of making those big bucks? Turns out that, once you take away the Hot Sites, there's not a lot left over (although the article never says that outright). And the blognates (blog magnates) are building lots of new blogs to soak up any excess revenue.

The hot blogs here aren't getting big bucks from Google AdWords, with its pay-per-click pricing. They're selling ads based on traditional cost-per-thousand-impressions models, and getting absurdly high rates ($7 per thousand and up). If I was in it for the money, I'd be jealous. When *Walt at random* ran AdWords, I averaged about a buck a month since most readers (properly) weren't interested in the ads enough to click through. Pay me $2 per thousand visits (less than one-third the rate of the hot Federated Media sites), and I'd be bringing in $3 a **day** at current visitation rates—not serious money, but not bad for a midrange blog and enough that there might still be ads on the blog. But you have to be hot stuff to get impressions-based ad revenue, and I think *The great unread* and other articles discussed previously pretty much spell out the odds of becoming hot stuff if you're an honest-to-gosh blogger.

Formal and Scholarly Articles

Bloggers: A portrait of the internet's new storytellers

This 25-page Pew Internet & American Life report (July 19, 2006) is unusual: It draws from two different polls over a period of time. One "random-digit survey" has a sample of more than 7,000 adults (4,750 of them internet users, 8% of those bloggers). That's a large enough survey that *general* results are probably as accurate as telephone surveys can get. (That last is a general caveat: I believe that such a high percentage of dual-income households and people with active social lives refuse to answer telephone surveys that *all* phone surveys are defective, although certainly not as defective as internet surveys.)

The other survey yielded 233 results, *not* enough for the results to be very meaningful even at the grossest level. Once you start reporting on subsets of that survey, things get pretty dicey; you become aware that "9% of those who…" means "26 people said…"

The report addresses that issue and the added issue that question wording may not elicit the right responses. Jumping to the penultimate page, consider these sentences:

> For example, a blogroll is also sometimes called a friends list or a subscription list. The term "hits" used to ask bloggers about their traffic has inconsistent meaning across software packages and thus may not accurately measure traffic to a particular weblog.

I'll use *Walt at random* to illustrate both problems (not to mention a larger problem with the use of "RSS" in a question). I don't have a blogroll, and if I was responding to that question I'd say **no** (but I don't respond to phone surveys). But I *do* have a link in the "Places" section of the right-hand column called

"Blogs I read," which links to the public portion of my Bloglines subscription: In other words, a subscription list. As to hits, consider October 1-November 13: Urchin says I had 117,633 hits—but 61,063 *sessions* (called "visits" in other blog analysis software). So is my daily average 1,388 or 2,673? If asked, I'd say "over 1,300 sessions per day," but the other number is equally valid. There's another twist if you're looking for *big* numbers: Urchin separates out hits from robots (including feed checkers), as it should—and those total another 83,785 for that period. So is the "right" number really "over 200,000"?

The RSS issue? The report says "only 18% of bloggers offer an RSS feed of their blog's content." I find that unlikely, given that such feeds are pretty much automatic with most blogging software. I *do* find it plausible that only 18% of bloggers find "RSS feed" a meaningful term. Ask whether people can subscribe to a feed of their blogs, and a much higher percentage might say yes—or might not, if LiveJournal and MySpace are really the top blogging sites.

So: Lots of caveats. Which I mention because this report is just chock full of fascinating tidbits, many of which make perfectly good sense—and it's not always clear which tidbits are based on large samples and which are mostly anecdotal.

You've probably heard some of the highlights, since the report's been out for four months. If you haven't, it's worth downloading (from www.pewinternet.org). Be *particularly* wary of any statement that begins "Typical bloggers"—since there's no such thing, based on the survey itself. Neither the median nor the mean of the 233-person universe can be considered "typical." It may be reasonable to say that:

- Slightly more bloggers use pseudonyms than use their real names.
- Only about a third of bloggers consider *their* blog a form of journalism.
- Almost nine out of ten blogs allow comments.
- Most bloggers are under 30, slightly more than half live in the suburbs, but age, location, and racial breakdowns are both based on very small samples.
- Very few bloggers spend lots of time on it, and very few (around one-seventh) blog every day. Only about a third stick to one topic.
- I wonder about this one: Supposedly, almost half of bloggers have two or more blogs—and more than a quarter have three or more. Really? Additionally, almost a third of the bloggers say their primary blog is a multi-author blog.
- Most bloggers only post when they have something to say.
- This one represents odd emphasis in the heading: "Text dominates most blogs, but one-third of bloggers post audio files." That may be true—but the paragraph also says "72% display photos on their blogs" and 49% post "images other than photos." Why focus on audio? Oddly, only 80% of bloggers say they post *text* to their blogs: Does that mean 20% of blogs consist *entirely* of photos, video, or audio?
- Most people are rational about blogging for money: Only 15% say "earning money is reason they blog" and 8% report actual income.
- "The audience of a particular blog is technically nearly impossible to measure." Now there's an *unmistakably* true statement. Only 13% of bloggers report more than 100 hits a day, with 22% stating fewer than ten (almost half have no idea).
- "Of the bloggers who do know their traffic, male bloggers…are more likely to report higher average levels of traffic." I won't offer a line about the male tendency to exaggerate size…oops, I guess I just did.
- "Blog writers are enthusiastic blog readers." One would hope so—and I wonder about the 10% of bloggers who *haven't* read any other blogs. Isn't that a little like writing books but not reading them?

Don't take any of this stuff too seriously. As a set of overall indicators, I suspect it's about right.

Why phishing works

An article by Rachna Dhamija, J.D. Tygar, and Marti Hearst (Harvard, UC Berkeley, and UC Berkeley) presented at CHI 2006 and readily available on the web. It's an interesting study reported in a ten-page article.

The trio analyzed a "large set of captured phishing attacks" and developed hypotheses as to why the strategies might work. They then did a usability study in which 22 participants were shown 20 web sites and asked to determine which ones were fraudulent. It's a small-scale study, but nonetheless interesting. 23% of the participants did *not* look at browser cues such as the address line, status bar, and security indicators, leading to incorrect choices 40% of the time.

The paper notes common phishing methods to disguise phony sites and some underlying issues. It's a tough world. Newer browser versions may help, but awareness on the part of users is fundamental. I assume that you never click on a link without glancing at the actual URL at the bottom of the browser window when you hover over the link (or in the tooltip, in Outlook and some other cases)?

A few other notes: Popup warnings about certificates were ineffective. The worst case (fooling 20 participants) was an exact copy of the Bank of the West homepage—but the domain was "bankofthevvest" not "bankofthewest." Try spotting that difference on the screen! (*One* participant did—and she was between 53 and 58 years old.) Six spoof sites fooled at least half of the participants—but two *real* sites were assumed to be spoofs by at least half of the participants, which is bad news for Etrade and Capital One.

Fascinating stuff. Don't worry about the sample size; **read this paper** as a guide to what you *should* be looking for.

Creating community: The blog as a networking device
Just a brief mention, almost a shout out to "CW" of *Ruminations*—Constance Wiebrands of Curtin University of Technology in Australia. Her article is an interesting brief introduction to blogs and their likely value for librarians engaged in "conversations" among themselves and with patrons. I'm not ready to buy the "library as conversation" meme, at least not as the primary or sole thrust of libraries—but you don't need to accept that thesis to find this article valuable.

Weibrands was a naysayer about blogs "when asked to investigate blogging and its implications for the Library and Information Service at Curtin… What value could blogging, an indulgent, over-hyped waste of time, possibly have for librarians and for the library as a whole?" That was at the start of 2005. She learned; she surveyed a few dozen libloggers; and she now runs one worthwhile blog and contributes to another one.

She "consider[s] the comments feature to be what truly differentiates a blog from a 'traditional' website." I can't agree with that—but I'll agree that if you're looking for conversation, comments are a must. Wiebrands offers quotes from some of those surveyed. She cites a typically inflated number for the total number of blogs, but that's irrelevant to her points.

I trust Curtin found this report worthwhile. I certainly enjoyed reading it.

The Library Stuff

Crook, Edgar, "For the record: Assessing the impact of archiving on the archived," *RLG DigiNews* 10:4 (August 15, 2006).

Full disclosure: As before, it's worth noting that *RLG DigiNews* isn't edited by (former) RLG (now OCLC) staff. It continues to be produced by the IRIS Research Department of Cornell University Libraries. Crook is at the National Library of Australia, and this fascinating article recounts experience with PANDORA, Australia's Web Archive: an NLA project that's been archiving web-based publications for a decade. PANDORA includes some 12,000 titles, ranging from one document to "a whole government website containing thousands of pages."

"This study examines publisher behaviour and attitudes in relation to Internet archiving." "Publisher" means "document producer" in this case, not inherently a commercial publisher. NLA used an online survey and examined archived material—and also compared "knowingly-archived" material in PANDORA with some "unknowingly-archived" material in other archives. (PANDORA explicitly seeks permission before archiving; that's not true of all internet archives, most specifically not the Internet Archive.)

Internet publications archived in PANDORA may get more respect, since the request to archive involves explicit selection criteria: "One publisher of an online novel has even used [an] excerpted sentence [from the form letter] to make it seem like a positive review." Almost all the producers thought PANDORA archiving was worthwhile—but only 35% used PANDORA to view any other website, and roughly a third didn't believe PANDORA would actually provide long-term preservation. Most publishers don't rely on PANDORA as a backup method.

PANDORA is a "light archive" (materials are openly available). It gets reasonably high usage, more than five million pages in 2004-2005 (the most frequently accessed sites being those no longer available on the 'live web'). But 92% of publishers thought PANDORA archiving resulted in *more* hits for their publications.

PANDARA includes some blogs—and they wondered whether inclusion might cause bloggers to self-censor. Apparently not, based on survey results and studying archived and unarchived blogs. As for pure

ejournals, mostly from government and academic sites, most publishers believe PANDORA archiving increases citation rates but doesn't have much effect on submission rates.

A fascinating report, **well worth reading**.

Dowling, Thomas, "UTF-8 and Latin-1: The leaning tower of Babel," *Techessence.info*, posted June 24, 2006.

Dowling offers a pithy explanation of the relationship between Latin-1 (the expanded ASCII character set you most often encounter) and UTF-8, the most common way of transmitting Unicode. ASCII's a 7-bit code. Latin-1 is the most common way of using the extra 128 slots (or, actually, extra *usable* 96 slots) available with 8 bits.

Unicode provides for universal character encoding: It allows "several million slots, currently with a little under 100,000 of them assigned to characters." But you can't fit several million bit patterns into an 8-bit character, so Unicode requires multibyte character encoding. And, although making every character 24 bits (three bytes) long would support more than 16 million patterns, that won't work in the real world: It breaks existing ASCII and Latin-1 text and uses three times as much data all those times when what you need is a basic Roman character set. That's where UTF-8 comes in. UTF-8 is identical to ASCII for slots 0 through 127—but once you reach slot 160 (128 through 159 left blank), the initial byte determines *how many bytes* constitute a character. "*Which means that UTF-8 requires all supporting code and applications to break the 'one byte=one character' assumption* ***and*** *UTF-8 is* ***not*** *compatible with Latin-1*."

The rest of Dowling's commentary is why I **recommend** this item. He deals with real-world problems in an era where most browsers and PC programs *do* recognize UTF-8: It's not universal in the computer and communications fields. He's looking at a journal article about thermal springs in Turkey—and names of the springs and authors are coming out garbled.

> The problem, if my diagnosis is anywhere close, is that we have multibyte UTF-8 characters being passed through code that treats them as single byte characters (probably Latin-1), and then being passed through code that converts each of those into multibyte UTF-8 characters. Repeat a few times and the result is gibberish.

I won't attempt to replicate that gibberish here; it might come out as *different* gibberish. I'd guess the problem is as Dowling diagnoses it—although it's still possible that some EBCDIC-ASCII translations are mixed in as well.

Dowling discusses the problem and its ramifications. Support for UTF-8 is still hit or miss, and all it takes is one misstep along the way to destroy the character set integrity. As Dowling concludes (prior to one more cute example), interoperability is still tricky.

Final report of the field test of the Playaway self-contained portable digital audio book player conducted by the Mid-Illinois Talking Book Center, March 31, 2006.

This 18-page report offers detailed analysis of this four-month project, which involved 50 blind and visually impaired volunteers and "several copies of 25 titles" on Playaways. There were 140 circulations during the period; 55 feedback forms were returned.

What's a Playaway? The title describes it well: A little device looking like a miniature book, containing one digital audiobook, a battery (and space for a spare battery), playback controls, and earbuds. You don't load it with ebook content: The content and the player are a single purchased unit. That makes it a self-contained circulating library item if you can deal with earbud hygiene, and a particularly interesting possibility where ebooks are needed.

The devices were "fairly rugged," although the LCD readout on one unit malfunctioned. Because the earbuds didn't have comfort pads, they were easy to clean but somewhat uncomfortable. Playaways support bookmarks, but it's apparently easy to erase them and reset the book to its beginning.

There weren't enough feedback forms to be statistically significant and no such significance is claimed: This was a field test. That said, 50 of 55 responses rated the Playaway experience at least somewhat satisfactory; that's an excellent result. The devices eliminate some of the overhead of digital audiobooks—no installation, no downloads. The task force concluded, "The overall response to this new type of pre-loaded self-contained digital audio book playback device was very positive."

Which is not to say all was peaches and cream. The volume button is one way: Volume keeps going up until it hits maximum, then wraps around to minimum. Six responses found that problematic. The buttons (which don't provide audible feedback) gave some people trouble. Behavior was sometimes inconsistent. Variable speed playback was popular—but it's only *faster* or *fastest* and you have to reset the speed

each time you start the unit. Replacing batteries proved difficult for some—and some users weren't happy with sound quality (but found it much better when they switched to their own headphones).

Most respondents still prefer audiocassettes, but some are ready to shift to the Playaway (some prefer CD audiobooks, mostly for sound quality). As you'd expect based on other audiobook experience, most people prefer unabridged versions.

There aren't many Playaway titles yet (45 as of early June 2006) and they're pricey ($35 to $50), but they could still be useful—if the medium survives. (Thanks to the Mid-Illinois Talking Book Center for a clear and comprehensive report.)

Footnote: This commentary was delayed several months. Since then, a number of other libraries have reported informally on experience with Playaway—mostly favorable, a few unfavorable (usually related to battery life). Playaway audiobooks are **purchased physical devices that combine content and carrier (like print books)**: First sale and fair use rights apply. The collection is growing: Playaway's website shows 165 titles as of early November 2006.

Huwe, Terence K., "From librarian to digital communicator," *Online* 30:5 (September/October 2006): 21-26.

A fascinating story of a specialized academic library becoming more integral to its parent organization. Huwe runs the library at UC Berkeley's Institute of Industrial Relations and has used his librarian skills to solve problems for the institute as a whole—everything from building community with email to becoming a *paper* publisher. Huwe offers some cogent thoughts in answer to the natural response to his article, "But that's not 'library' work." Part of the long answer is, I think, worth hearing for most any library: "An academic library that sees itself as a passive repository is a library at risk." Here's the short answer:

> Does a library exist to serve its user community? If so, then any and all work that serves those users—and advances the library's role—is "library work." Are we just a tad busy? Yes. Is it worth it? You bet.

Definitely **worth reading**.

Murray, Peter, "Defining 'Service Oriented Architecture' by analogy," "Services in a Service Oriented Architecture," "The dis-integration of the ILS into a SOA environment," *Disruptive technology library jester*, posted September 18, 19, and 20, 2006.

I'm not going to summarize or comment on this trio of posts (which begin a continuing series on SOA). I'm going to **recommend** it—and, when you're at the blog, look at the other posts in the "library SOA" category. Murray helped me understand what service-oriented architecture is all about and what it can or should mean for library systems. I found the second post particularly interesting, as it proceeds from how you could add local holdings directly into Worldcat.org, to "is that what the user really wanted?" to possible layers of services. It's enlightening—and if you're trying to make the case for disintegrating the ILS, I think Murray's methodology is more convincing than deriding OPACs or upholding Google as the model of all that's good in searching. The series is most definitely part of a conversation; be sure to read the comments and linked posts.

Murray, Peter, "Just in time acquisitions versus just in case acquisitions," *Disruptive technology library jester*, posted August 2, 2006.

> What [i]f a service existed where the patrons selected an item they needed out of our library catalog and that item was delivered to the patron *even when the library did not yet own the item*? Would that be useful?

That's the starting point for a thoughtful discussion of possible ways to make libraries more competitive with Amazon, assuming that such competition is a reasonable role. Murray isn't explicitly advocating for such a system, but he's trying to expose the factors that would be required to make it work. Briefly, he sees four factors:

- The local catalog would need to display records for items not yet held that could be acquired rapidly.
- You'd need "a highly automated process to get the requested book to the library."
- Fast copy cataloging and shelf preparation would be essential—although some (or all) of that could take place after the initial circulation (indeed, as the first commenter suggests, the book might be shipped directly from the publisher/distributor to the patron, who would then return it to the library).
- The roles of librarians would change in somewhat disruptive ways.

The summary of how those roles would change is clear and provides a good starting point for discussion of feasibility and desirability. I'm not prepared to come down on either side of whether this is a desir-

able use of library resources or whether it's desirable for libraries to compete with booksellers rather than complementing them: I don't know. I'm a firm believer that *some* level of just-in-case acquisition is appropriate and perhaps vital for most libraries, but that's another issue, and I don't think Murray's saying otherwise. I'll close with Murray's final paragraphs, after summarizing steps in the processing stream:

> Can we do this as fast as it would take the patron to get the item directly from the online bookseller? Maybe not—we do have some necessary processing steps that a direct patron purchase does not have. Can we make that delay short enough so that the patron considers it acceptable as compared to the direct price premium of ordering it themselves?
>
> Do we want to?

Sierra, Tito, "Snippets," *The horseless library*, posted July 10, 2006.

"Text snippets are different from abstracts and summaries because they are algorithmically extracted from the source text, rather than editorially created to function as a summary or teaser." Sierra suggest comparing news blurbs at Google News (snippets) with the New York *Times* online (teasers): Google News uses the first *n* words of the source article, while the *Times* blurb is a form of abstract.

Sierra discusses other ways to derive snippets—for example, the snippets within Google results and Google Book Search, and an experiment that prepared blurbs for New York *Times* pieces by combining the headline and the *last* paragraph of the article. Sierra's brief discussion of other possibilities is worth thinking about. Sierra concludes:

> Can you think of other methods for generating snippets? Are snippets evil?

I'd say "not inherently, but—as with calculated metadata as compared to cataloging—they're not as good as summaries." As for the first, consider this:

> What's a Playaway? The title describes it well: A little digital device looking like a miniature book, containing one digital audiobook, a battery (and space for a spare battery), playback controls, and earbuds. Once a library buys a Playaway, it owns it. Period.

That's a four-sentence, 43-word summary of my 514-word commentary earlier in this section. It's a snippet of sorts, prepared by Word's AutoSummarize function set to 10%. It could be a whole lot worse!

Sullivan, Danny, "Hello natural language search, my old over-hyped search friend," *SearchEngineWatch*, October 5, 2006.

Not directly library-related but worth reading if you're a librarian waiting for natural language search to finally work and make a real difference. Sullivan notes a new (and so far unavailable) search engine, Powerset, that apparently claims to use natural language analysis to give better search results.

Sullivan's been seeing similar claims for a decade or more. He notes how the hype works (when you have a working engine—Powerset's still in "stealth mode") and why it's unrealistic, particularly given that most people use very short searches *or* very specific searches that don't require much analysis. ("Memorial Hospital Modesto," to take an example that mattered personally to me recently, doesn't require much fancy analysis to yield a great result.) Sullivan also notes the kind of "conceptual expansion" that Clusty and Ask already do—and, to be sure, that Worldcat.org does and RedLightGreen used to do, in a narrower context.

He offers a brief history of "natural language analysis" in search engines over the past decade, based only on the articles he's written, including Excite, Electric Monk (!), FAST, BrainBoost, MeaningMaster, Stochasto, and Kozoru. All of which have set the world on fire and revolutionized web searching, right?

Sullivan notes that one of Powerset's people is busily blogging about how Powerset's going to change users' "two or three word" habits and how, in five to ten years, we'll look back at those bad old days when we did keyword searching. "If Powerset's going to change those habits, good luck." He's not enthusiastic about the probability. Interesting, cogent discussion.

Library Access to Scholarship

If you care about open access, you should be reading the *SPARC Open Access Newsletter (SOAN)*. Period. The excellence and breadth of Peter Suber's coverage, and the fairness of his commentary, are primary reasons LIBRARY ACCESS TO SCHOLARSHIP appears so rarely: It's largely superfluous.

If you *really* care about open access, you should make sure these four blogs are in your bookmarks or your aggregator subscriptions: *Open access news*, *DigitalKoans*, *OA librarian* and, although it covers considerably more than OA, *Caveat lector*. (*Open access news* may make more sense as a bookmark, given the vol-

ume of coverage and the way it's organized.) There are others, but those will provide broad, deep coverage.

Here's another wildly incomplete selection of items, with my commentary as an OA independent scattered among the notes. The big story is another legislative attempt to encourage open access to federally funded research—and the usual reactions to that proposed legislation.

Federal Research Public Access Act

Senators John Cornyn (R-TX) and Joe Lieberman (D-CT) introduced FRPAA on May 2, 2006. According to Peter Suber's coverage (beginning in *SOAN* 97), "This is [a] giant step forward for OA, even bigger than the CURES Act that Senator Lieberman introduced in December 2005." Some details (excerpted from *SOAN)*:

- FRPAA applies to all federal funding agencies that spend more than $100 million/year on research grants to non-employees. At the moment, 11 agencies fall into this category: the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), National Science Foundation (NSF), and the cabinet-level Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Education, Energy, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, and Transportation. NIH is part of Health and Human Services, so it's covered.
- Agencies have one year from the adoption of the bill to develop OA policies. They may host OA repositories or ask grantees to deposit their work in any OA repository meeting the agency's conditions of open access, interoperability, and long-term preservation.
- FRPAA applies to the *final* version of the author's peer-reviewed manuscript, which must incorporate all changes introduced by the peer-review process. Publishers can opt to replace the author's manuscript with the published version when the agency decides that the published version advances the agency's "goals...for functionality and interoperability."
- FRPAA applies to manuscripts arising from "research supported, in whole or in part from funding by the Federal Government" including projects with multiple sources of funding and those with multiple authors, as long as one is covered.
- Agencies must insure free online access to these manuscripts "as soon as practicable, but not later than 6 months after publication in peer-reviewed journals."
- Agency policies must apply to agency employees as well as agency grantees, but work by employees will be in the public domain, labeled as such, and released to the public *immediately* upon publication.
- The OA mandate does *not* apply to lab notes, preliminary data analyses, personal notes, phone logs, classified research, revenue-producing publications like books, patentable discoveries, or work not submitted to journals or not accepted for publication.
- Agencies will maintain OA bibliographies of publications resulting from their funded research, with active links from citations to OA editions.
- Nothing in the bill modifies patent or copyright law.
- Instead of (or perhaps simply before) relying on copyright-holder consent as the legal basis for disseminating copies of the articles, the agencies must "make effective use of any law or guidance relating to the creation and reservation of a Government license that provides for the reproduction, publication, release, or other uses of a final manuscript for Federal purposes." Two existing licenses may come into play.

Suber's comment on that last:

> Don't let the technical detail of this section disguise its importance. The NIH recognized the existence of a government license to provide OA to NIH-funded research, but deliberately decided not to use it. Instead, it relied on publisher consent, with the effect that it accommodated, if not invited, publisher resistance. By relying on government licenses instead, FRPAA makes publisher dissent irrelevant.

- Once a year, agency heads will report on their public-access policy to the Senate. They must assess the effectiveness of their policies in providing free online access to the agency's research output, list published papers to which the policy applies, list papers made freely available under the policy, and report on delays or embargoes between journal publication and free online access under the agency policy. All reports and lists must themselves be OA (4.f.3).
- The rationale for the bill: "Congress finds that the Federal Government funds basic and ap-

> plied research with the expectation that new ideas and discoveries that result from the research, if shared and effectively disseminated, will advance science and improve the lives and welfare of people of the United States and around the world." Moreover, "the Internet makes it possible for this information to be promptly available to every scientist, physician, educator, and citizen at home, in school, or in a library."

Could FRPAA be stronger? Sure. As Suber notes, it doesn't currently provide for processing fees charged by (some) OA journals; it doesn't directly require *deposit* in an OAI repository immediately upon acceptance; and it doesn't address noncompliance. But the policies required by FRPAA could very well address those issues.

It's a good bill—Suber calls it "superb." He says, "It's informed by the arguments for OA and the shortcomings of the NIH policy." What are its chances? Suber notes bipartisan support, that the boldest ideas (a mandate rather than a request, and a six-month deadline) were both approved by both houses of Congress in its instructions to the NIH, and evidence that NIH's weak policy doesn't harm journals—but also doesn't yield much participation.

In the same issue of *SOAN*, Suber notes that NIH Director Elias Zerhouni testified before the NIH-appropriating subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee on April 4, 2006.

> Rep. Ernest Istook (R-OK) pointed out the low compliance rate for the NIH public-access policy and asked what we could do to improve it. According to an observer present for the testimony, Zerhouni responded that "it seems the voluntary policy is just not enough" and that he will have to review the recommendations of the NLM Board of Regents. Those recommendations, of course, included a shift from a request to a mandate. At the same time, however, Zerhouni said the 6 to 12 month embargo is "a different issue" and affects the economic viability of publishing and peer review. He called the 6-12 month period "the sweet spot" and said "I don't think we should do anything at the expense of peer review."

It's a shame Zerhouni finds it necessary to repeat the usual "endangering peer review" myth.

Immediate responses and later notes

Publishers were all over FRPAA within a few days. A May 8, 2006 New York *Times* article begins with a solidly anti-FRPAA bias:

> Scholarly publishing has never been a big business. But it could take a financial hit if a proposed federal law is enacted, opening taxpayer-financed research to the public, according to some critics in academic institutions.

That first sentence is questionable—although I suppose you could twist definitions enough to call Elsevier and Wiley something other than "big business." Most of us, I suspect, assume that anything measured in billions of dollars per year (or even hundreds of millions) qualifies as big business. The second sentence does have a key phrase—"taxpayer-financed research," the kind of thing that perhaps *ought* to be available to, ahem, taxpayers—but makes a point of citing critics as being "in academic institutions." Oddly, though, at least the first two objections are from publishers—or, rather, societies acting as publishers. They're high-minded: One says "advertising promotion" may be affected if articles are freely available and another brings up the paternalistic "can ordinary citizens be trusted to interpret scientific data?" theme. Suber comments on the "pettiness of the publisher objections" and—well, I can't say it any better:

> Should we really reduce the effectiveness of the enormous US public investment in research in order to help journals measure traffic and charge for ads? Should we really reduce access for scientists in order to paternalize non-scientists who may not understand the literature or care to read it? Let's get serious. It's not about journal advertising or journal subscriptions, and it's only secondarily about lay readers. It's about $55 billion/year in research, making it available to all the researchers who can apply or build on it, and making it as useful as it can possibly be.

Michael Carroll (Villanova University, on the board of Creative Commons) commented on the *Times* article in a same-day post at *Carrollogos*. He finds the elitist argument "particularly galling"…the idea "that taxpayers cannot be trusted with open access because they might harm themselves by misreading or misunderstanding an article written by specialists for specialists." He looks at analogous arguments: Voters shouldn't get information about the war on Iraq because they might misunderstand the complexity of modern warfare; they shouldn't have access to hurricane readiness info because meteorology is complex. (I could see officials arguing the first example!).

Barbara Fister also commented in a May 10 post at *ACRLog*, "*Never been a big business?* Don't tell Elsevier shareholders." Fister is sympathetic to the scholarly society argument that they might lose profit that now provides "membership perks," but finds the ad argument odd—and is nicely snarky about the "misunderstanding" argument. She finds that argu-

ment a little dubious—"It's not that [ordinary folks] will benefit by reading them, because for the most part they won't, but that they will benefit because *scientists* will have greater access to them. And that public good is why we fund their research in the first place." I'd disagree in part: In fact, "ordinary folks" have benefited from greater access to medical literature, if only so they can ask questions and probe beyond initial findings.

On May 9, Jeffrey Goldfarb of Reuters reported that Wiley, Elsevier and others "are launching an offensive against newly proposed U.S. legislation that would require them to make much of *their* research available for free within six months of publication." [Emphasis added.] **Wrong**, FRPAA would not make *one iota* of Elsevier's or Wiley's research available; it would make *taxpayer-funded* research available, as the second paragraph notes.

This article is another one with a clear slant, informing us that publishers invest "hundreds of millions of dollars" and charge subscriptions for "up to hundreds of dollars a year." If only STM journals ran "up to hundreds of dollars a year," rather than thousands and sometimes tens of thousands! But AAP/PSP's chair (I hate to give his last name) informs us that this mandate "will be a powerful disincentive for publishers to continue these substantial investments." PSP wants an "independent study" on the effects FRPAA might have "on research quality and taxpayer costs"—which makes no sense at all unless PSP is somehow suggesting that making research publicly available will lower its quality. And, of course, we can all get to the papers anyway: "the general public can find the journals at libraries and nearly all researchers access it through their universities or companies." PSP's chair even suggests that NIH "wanted to show limited compliance to gain a mandatory policy"—and a different AAP official raises the "peer review" alarm. As to balance in this particular article, there's almost three times as much text supporting the AAP/PSP view as providing FRPAA arguments; the piece reads more as advocacy than as journalism.

Peter Suber posted a May 9 AAP/PSP press release that may be the source of the Reuters story. The press release goes further. Quoting:

> Publishers argue that the legislation, if passed, will seriously jeopardize the integrity of the scientific publishing process, and is a duplicative effort that places an unwarranted burden on research investigators… The provisions…threaten to undermine the essential value of peer review… "Full public access to scientific articles based on government funding has always been central to our mission."… Americans have easy access to [STM literature] through public libraries [and other means]… [FRPAA] would expropriate the value-added investments made by scientific publishers… [It] could well have the unintended consequence of compromising or destroying the independent system of peer review."

There's more, most of it the same tired old myths including the "centrality" of "full public access" to PSP's mission and the easy availability of STM literature through public libraries.

Suber offered a ten-point rebuttal to the press release in a May 10, 2006 *Open access news* posting—a vivid discussion peppered with "false" and "begs the question." FRPAA isn't duplicative; AAP/PSP clearly doesn't behave as though full public access was its policy; STM literature isn't generally available in public libraries (and not *fully* available in academic libraries); most peer review is done for free and not endangered by OA; and calling for another study is, at best, disingenuous. But go read the post; Suber handles justifiable anger at these repeated myths with élan and eloquence.

May 11, 2006: *The Scientist* chimes in with "Publishers, societies oppose 'public access' bill." Martin Frank of the DC Principles Coalition says FRPAA unfairly puts authors "between the agency that funds the research and the publisher" if the publisher refuses to grant "republication" rights—but as Suber notes, no member of the DC group has refused to publish federally funded research. In any case, the government *has* a license and legitimate cause to enforce its policy, which should eliminate this threat from publishers.

I find this case sad. The American Anthropological Association came out against FRPAA. The AnthroSource Steering Committee disagreed; it sent AAA a letter indicating support for FRPAA. As recounted at *Savage minds* by a member of the committee, AAA sat on the letter for two months, at which point this member said that if AAA didn't publish the letter, it would appear on the blog—and posted it. A few weeks later, AAA disbanded the AnthroSource Steering Committee.

Here's an unfortunate one, showing how much Jan Velterop has changed since he went to work for Springer. In a May 16, 2006 post at *The Parachute*, he calls the bill "a bit of a dog's dinner" and says, "The six months' embargo is a perilously short period of time for most publishers to recoup their costs via subscriptions." He admits to "assertions" that such an embargo

poses no threats and that immediate self-archiving is safe. He notes ArXiv and the continued health of physics journals but calls it "evidence" only with scare quotes. Astonishingly, Velterop goes further in his Amazing Shrinking Parachute role:

> I know of *assertions* that not all OA journals charge authors anything at all. This is undoubtedly so, but a quick look at those journals leaves one with the inescapable impression that ideas about scaling up that mode of operation to anywhere near the bulk of the serious journal literature firmly belong in the realm of unlimited impossibilities. [Emphasis added.]

Even the PSP-funded study found the *fact* that *most* OA journals do not charge author-side fees. The second sentence, stated without examples, is unfortunate, as it appears to dismiss such journals as inconsequential. Frankly, Velterop comes off here much more as an employee of a Big Commercial Journal Publisher than he does as an OA advocate.

Skipping over some other examples of misleading (and typical) anti-OA rhetoric, I come to a striking Viewpoint in the Spring 2006 *Issues in Science and Technology Librarianship* (which is, with no apologies to Jan Velterop's dismissive comment, an outstanding open access journal that charges no author-side fees because its minimal costs are covered by the Science and Technology Section of ACRL, the Association of College and Research Libraries). David Flaxbart notes the introduction of FRPAA and continues:

> Naturally, it didn't take long for the publishing industry's lobbyists, led by the eminently hissable American Association of Publishers, to shake off their cocktail-circuit stupor and begin frothing at the mouth at this dangerous exercise in socialist engineering. They immediately trotted out their tired and discredited mantras about the loss of subscription revenue, removal of investment incentives, and threats to peer review, in addition to the accusations that the government is trying to fix a system that—for them at least—isn't broken.

After citing some of the rhetoric from the AAP and labeling as "absurd" the claim that Americans have easy access to the STM literature, Flaxbart continues:

> It is sad that some of the loudest anti-OA rhetoric is coming from some non-profit publishers and societies who should really know better by now, and whose pretense at protecting the integrity of science has long since been exposed as a ploy to protect their revenue streams. We all know who they are. Claims of imminent bankruptcy are disingenuous at best, especially those coming from publishers rolling in cash. Societies that depend on money from library budgets to fund most of their activities need to divert their energies to looking for new sources of revenue, because the golden goose is on life support.
>
> The claim of threats to the system of peer review also seems particularly weak now, given the recent well-publicized hits that system has taken in the wake of high-profile scandals such as the Woo Suk Hwang case in stem cell research. Editors have scrambled to explain that peer review isn't really intended to catch fraud after all. Knowledgeable observers can understand the finer points of their arguments, but these are lost on an increasingly skeptical public. Journals are actively abdicating any responsibility for investigating fraud, which further erodes their credibility. Publishers' persistent defense of this tattered fig leaf of "added value" is starting to sound rather desperate.

As Flaxbart notes, FRPAA's future is uncertain—but even the proposal is cause for celebration.

The June 2006 *SOAN* includes a followup on FRPAA, noting that a Harris poll in late May 2006 showed that an overwhelming majority of Americans want OA for publicly funded research: 83% wanted their doctors to have such access, 82% wanted *everyone* to have it. Suber also notes what I couldn't help but notice: "Some mainstream news media covering the proposal give much more space and detail to publisher objections than to the proposal's own rationale or to the supporting arguments…" His take: "It's as if these media companies were dedicated to business news rather than general news."

An August 31 post at *T Scott* notes a letter opposing FRPAA being circulated for signatures among senior leadership of some research institutions—"clearly in response to the supporting letters signed by provosts from around the country." Scott says the DC Principles group is behind the letter, since earlier versions are on their website. He's not surprised by the letter or the fact that it's getting a few signatures. He also believes these people, most of them involved with society publishers, "sincerely believe that FRPAA threatens the health of the societies to which they have devoted a significant portion of their attention and time throughout their careers. They are not wrong to be concerned."

Scott goes on to say that some journals *will* fold and it's "disingenuous of open access partisans to argue that FRPAA and related efforts don't represent a serious threat." But he says the tide is changing in any case; "traditional subscription-based publishing is on the wane, and societies whose economy is based on it are going to have to make radical changes." Academic librarians should be worried as well because "we need [the societies] to weather this transition successfully…. Yes, we need open access; but we need

strong, vibrant and effective scholarly societies, playing a critical and key role in managing the scholarly communication process."

Maybe so—but, once again, *those societies can no longer fund themselves through library subsidies*. That was *never* an appropriate financial model, and it's simply unsupportable at this point. If societies need subsidies, those subsidies need to be in the open; they *cannot* continue to be hidden subsidies taken from library budgets. (Dorothea Salo comments on Scott's post in a September 25, 2006 *Caveat lector* post. Her stance is pretty much the same one I've been repeating: "*Libraries are not responsible for supporting society activities unrelated to the scholarly literature.*" She goes on to add more commentary—and notes, as I would agree, that the *responsible* scholarly societies with reasonably-priced journals are "not the problem and never were," and OA is "not about [them] right now.")

The last item, for the moment, is a press release from ARL dated October 25, 2006: "Higher education and library leaders voice support for free access to federal research." The release notes a forum on "Improving Access to Publicly Funded Research" and voiced support during that forum. David Shulenberger of the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges notes the evidence of journals that *already* provide open access immediately or after brief delays: "That evidence is not consistent with an apocalyptic collapse of the subscriber base." SPARC and ARL officials spoke to the critical need for public access; Duane Webster of ARL called FRPAA "an essential step toward broadening access to widely needed information resources." The release also notes work at MIT and UC to aid faculty in retaining rights—and Clifford Lynch's note that other universities should provide institutional support for faculty negotiations with publishers.

Research Information

The June/July 2006 issue of *Research Information* featured a cluster of nine commentaries on open access from a range of (mostly British) perspectives. You'll find the lot online (www.researchinformation.info/, go to previous issues, June/July 2006). A few notes on some of the commentaries:

- Martin Richardson of Oxford Journals, which now offers Oxford Open as a hybrid option but also publishes some OA journals without author-side fees, says the firm is experimenting with models and claims not to have a "preconceived idea about which model is best." They don't believe there will *be* one single model (a sensible conclusion, in my opinion). So far—it's only been offered for a year or so—only 10 to 20% of authors have chosen the "author-pays" option in the life sciences, with lower percentages elsewhere. Richardson says there will be more research projects, and makes some sensible statements: "I don't see any effect to the peer-review process. We do the peer review and accept papers before we discuss with authors how the paper will be funded… Most models don't really involve the author or reader paying. It is the librarian or funding body…. Our view is that there is not a right or wrong way."
- Michael Mabe was with Elsevier and is now CEO of the International STM Association. He starts out much as you might expect: When asked how he defines open access, he comes up with this gem:

  > Giving a definition goes to the heart of the problem with open access. In principle it is free availability to everybody on the world-wide web. However, many academics think they are accessing open-access material or publishing in open-access journals when in fact there simply appear to be no barriers because their library has already paid for the subscription.
  >
  > In the industry as a whole there has not been an appreciable increase in downloads for open-access articles. This demonstrates that research papers are generally by academics for academics and they have access anyway.

  Given that bafflegab (don't OA advocates claim proof that the start of the second paragraph is false?), you won't be surprised that Mabe says Elsevier's position is "quite neutral"—but, of course, "many open-access journals are not sustainable and there is a concern about whether the articles that they hold will still be there in 10 or 15 years time." That, to me, is a new strawman: Oppose OA—which *inherently* supports institutional repositories, LOCKSS and other archiving initiatives, and pretty much any archiving technique—because the articles might disappear! There's a lot more, but it's painful to summarize, including comments about "true costs" rather than existing profits and overhead structure, claims that OA will exclude "different people" from the equation, an astonishing discussion of institutional repositories (they're for "showcasing a university" and "the material will

not necessarily be kept in any useful way," plus "it is potentially parasitic to traditional publishers"), and dismissal: "I am not sure that open access in the sense of an author-pays model is going to have much future." Mabe is consistent on one thing: Anything that might threaten the profit and overhead structures of *today's* journals is "clearly damaging the research process." Expect the International STM Association to be just as OA-friendly as AAP/PSP.

- Robert Terry of the Wellcome Trust is, as you might expect, friendlier to OA. "We want the digital versions of papers to be available to all in an unrestricted way and for them to be available forever by putting it in an archive or institutional repository." Wellcome is also strong on subject-based archives. Terry looks forward to text mining of subject archives to "enable new facts to be discovered." He's less excited by the future of institutional repositories. As for OA in general: "Open access is better for research." That's followed by what may be a non sequitur: "Publishing research in journals worked very well in a paper-based format but people do not work like that now." Since Wellcome's guidelines call for archival deposit "on the day of publication or no later than six months after publication," and since Terry goes on to note that it makes funding available to publish in OA journals, I don't understand the link with journals becoming irrelevant. Terry says the biggest challenge is the researchers—"There is a lot of passive inertia. They either don't know or don't care about open access. They publish work in journals but they don't even know how much the subscriptions cost."
- Tim Smith publishes the *New Journal of Physics*—an OA journal published by a traditional publisher, the Institute of Physics Publishing. It's been around since 1998 and growing since around 2001: "We expect to publish more than 300 papers in 2006." Smith regards it as prestigious (the Impact Factor in 2004 was 3.095 and rises every year), and it has a high rejection rate (70% rejections). "[O]ver 40,000 articles are downloaded each month and on average an *NJP* paper will be fully downloaded more than 700 times within one year of publication." That's "very high" when compared to other (subscription) IOPP journals. The author-side charge is £600 per article; 85% of articles are paid for (some are subsidized). IOPP hopes that the journal will be self-sustaining within five years.
- Matthew Cockerill is publisher at BioMed Central. He says the life sciences have "really led open access" (hasn't physics been a leader with ArXiv?) and OA "is driven partly by the frustrations at the barriers in the toll-access model." Cockerill notes, "Many areas of research are funded by taxpayers but they do not see the results." He says BMC has *proved* that online-only and open-access can compete with print subscription journals. The number of articles is doubling every 18 months and "authors have also been very pleased with download statistics." There are some 150 BMC journals; the current "realistic article-processing charge" is £750. BMC is expanding beyond biomed—"we already publish several chemistry journals and have had interest from the physics and social science communities." While OA is still small, it's growing; "We see this as a model whose time has come."
- Alma Swan is director of Key Perspectives, a consultancy. She's written on OA and says "dissemination of research results is a part of the research process and should be funded from within that." On the other hand, she has no problem with high profits for publishing companies. Swan focuses on institutional repositories as the way to achieve OA.
- Jens Vigen heads CERN's library. CERN's view is "that everything should be freely available to everybody, without any embargo." That's been the practice of CERN since its founding, and high-energy physicists started distributing preprints in the mid-1950s. To Vigen, a six-month embargo would be "a bit of a step backwards," as the community is "used to immediate release of preprints, six to 12 months *before* publication" [emphasis added." Vigen notes, "Publishers tell us that the physics pre-print archive does not affect their subscriptions"—but later does support a strawman: "Open-access publishing could disrupt the peer-review process" (Vigen adds: "but it could actually make it more stable if the funding bodies got involved"). Vigen ex-

pects to see charges of "perhaps $1000 per article" and considers this "affordable" from the viewpoint of funding research.

A Few from Open Access News

It's hopeless to summarize the excellent commentary Suber throws in with his extensive citations. Here are a few notes of interest, if only as ways to entice you to go to the originals:

- April 24: Suber critiques an article by William H. Walters on institutional journal costs in an OA environment because its cost analysis appears to have some of the same flaws as the Cornell study: Assuming that all OA journals charge author-side fees, that all such fees will be paid by the universities, and that the average fee will be $2,500 (an assumption that Walters refines). The first two assumptions are clearly incorrect.
- April 27: Commenting on a Jonathan Zittrain lecture that calls for universities to encourage their faculties to publish in OA journals, Suber says universities would be "much wiser to encourage or require OA archiving"—which may be true, but I have to fault one statement: "There's no reason for universities to steer faculty away from subscription journals, at least when these journals consent to the OA archiving of peer-reviewed postprints." I'll assert that there is one *very large* reason: Without a shift toward OA journals, today's crippling subscription prices will continue to make libraries more expensive and, on the whole, less valuable to their universities (because they have so little money left for anything beyond STM licenses).
- May 30: Suber cites John Udell citing John Willinsky on education and the internet. "Among his themes, Willinsky talks about how he, as a reading specialist, would never have predicted what has now become routine. Patients with no ability to read specialized medical literature are, nonetheless, doing so, and then arriving in their doctors' offices asking well-informed questions… 'They don't have a context? They build a context.'" The "access to research is dangerous for laypeople" strawman has always been elitist and patronizing; this is one example of why it's also probably false.
- August 22: BioMed Central broadens into chemistry—and the Royal Society of Chemistry's director of publishing strikes back, saying authors have "absolutely no interest" in OA publishing and that it's "ethically flawed," raising the risk of "substandard science" because peer review won't be rigorous and, sigh, risking the loss of the scientific record if journals go under. Suber gives clear answers to the usual canards.
- September 5: Richard Charkin of Macmillan raises an odd "issue" regarding OA: "None of this answers the fundamental question of why paying for publication is likely to result in better scientific literature than the existing subscriber system." As Suber notes, that's not an issue: OA improves *access* to the literature. OA could indirectly improve the literature by improving the chances that researchers know what's been done before, but "better scientific literature" isn't the claim of OA.

Notes from Dorothea Salo

> In my office cubicle, my woodcarving of Don Quixote sits tall on his spavined nag grasping his spear, his beard jutting proudly forward. He reminds me that I am predisposed to tilt at windmills. Sometimes I ought to lean back in my saddle with my hands folded over my paunch and survey the situation, like Sancho beside the Don.

Thus begins a first-rate May 12, 2006 *Caveat lector* post ("How are we doing?") on the likely future of open access. "I think the world will change in our direction. Utopia, certainly not. *An entirely open-access landscape, certainly not*. A world where many more people have unfettered access to much more research and scholarship—yes." [Emphasis added because it's such an important point: "100% OA" is *just not in the cards*.] Then Salo offers some reasons.

She thinks for-profit publishers are fighting on too many fronts—and their repeated lies about OA aren't working. As Salo notes, once the anti-OA forces lose *one* significant legislative battle, the whole landscape starts to change. Salo would be "honestly *shocked* to see nothing pass in the US or Western Europe within ten years." [Emphasis in the original.] So would I—and, unfortunately, I think you need to use a five- to ten-year horizon to be sure of a major victory. (I'd love to be proved wrong—to have FRPAA pass within the next three years, to have comparable British efforts take hold. Heck, I *hope* I'm wrong.)

Salo also notices the emergence (growth?) of grey literature and the open *data* movement, where publishers really don't have a plausible counter-argument.

> Slowly but surely, the environment is changing in an open-access direction. That's what I see. I don't see what can stop it. And as the environment changes, more and more researchers will make independent self-interest–based decisions to play along.

I think Salo's also right to feel that the continued indifference of most researchers isn't so bad: At least the researchers aren't, in general, actively *opposed* to OA. "If the slumbering behemoth had ranged itself behind the publishers, we'd be outright dead in the water." But that hasn't happened and isn't likely to. Meanwhile, although "the pace and nature of this change are glacial," change *is* happening. Yes, some OA journals will fail (some already have)—but it appears that most will succeed. Sure, some publishers will abandon overpriced "hybrid" experiments and claim that their failure proves OA doesn't work—but unless the big publishers hire *every* OA advocate (which is, I suppose, possible) their credibility on this issue is shrinking all the time. Meanwhile, OA institutional and subject repositories are growing (slowly but surely), new OA journals are springing up and some established ones are prospering, and some journals are converting to full OA or something close to it. I don't believe we'll ever get all the way there, but progress *is* happening.

A few days later (May 16, "That's the stuff,") Salo discussed "Citation advantage of open access articles" by Gunther Eysenbach (May 2006 *PLOS Biology*), a research article that finds:

> This comparison of the impact of OA and non-OA articles from the same journal in the first 4–16 mo after publication shows that OA articles are cited earlier and are, on average, cited more often than non-OA articles.

It appears to be a careful study: All articles studied (toll and OA) are from one high-impact, widely available hybrid journal (*PNAS*); all are newly published; other factors were canceled out. "And guess what. Even taking all that into account, there's *still* a significant and measurable advantage for open access."

There's a joker: Articles published as OA have higher impact than self-archived or otherwise openly-accessible OA articles. "Gold beats green," in other words. Salo buys that for newly published articles: "It's just plain easier to find an article via a publisher's website than on the open web." Salo thinks that will thin out over time, and she's probably right.

The next day (May 17), Salo takes on Harnad (at least indirectly). She admits to being "anti-for-profit-journal-publisher," and "[i]t blows my mind when Harnad et alia want to trust them with long-term e-journal archiv[ing]. I just cannot fathom it." As she notes (and she's worked for a service bureau), publishers don't understand preservation and have never been in the archival business. She offers a wicked little proposal (a fine one at that):

> If the repository I run has to go through NARA/RLG certification to be a trusted digital repository, why shouldn't publishers who want their electronic archives to be the e-copy of record have to do that, too? Libraries can write that into their contracts: "get NARA/RLG certified, participate in LOCKSS or Portico, and/or give us copies of the bits."
>
> If we're to trust them with the scholarly record, they're going to have to prove they're trustworthy. Libraries can relax, responsible publishers can show they're responsible, steps can be taken to cover for the irresponsible ones. Everybody wins except the slackers. I like that.

I don't track Stevan Harnad (for reasons that will be obvious to long-time readers), but he was apparently distraught over the Eysenbach article and an accompanying editorial. A back-and-forth followed. Salo offers comments on May 25; I **strongly recommend** reading them directly (and referencing the back-and-forth linked from Salo's post). Basically, while Salo agrees with Eysenbach that OA is more complicated than Harnad seems to accept, she's less convinced that journal-as-community continues to be a strong argument. She notes the virtues of depositories to promote interdisciplinarity and the greater ease with which "green OA" can capture datasets. But that's an unfair summary. Go read the original, which ends:

> In short, green and gold open access should not really be considered competitors; they are *complements*, and a great deal of the green-vs.-gold fuss verges on the ridiculous. I look forward to more thoughtful work and commentary such as Eysenbach's.

Jumping ahead to September 3, Salo discusses peer review (the hook to OA being that some anti-OA forces wrongly claim OA threatens peer review). She notes comments by Bob Holley in a fine *Info Career Trends* piece about peer review. For Holley—and for me when I've been a peer reviewer—gatekeeping is not the only or primary role. Holley rarely concludes that a paper's unsuitable and lets it go: "This has happened only about three times in all my years of peer reviewing." Holley goes on to note ways in which a good peer reviewer aids the author by finding and

pointing out errors, problems and inconsistencies that can be corrected *before* an article is published.

This is true in my experience, from both sides. The few peer-reviewed articles I've written were improved thanks to reviewers' comments. I've offered comments in reviewing articles that did, I believe, lead to improvement.

There is, as it happens, a connection to some of the more radical alternatives being proposed: That is, the suggestion that we'd do just as well with "post-publication peer review," comments and critiques following online publication. Salo:

> If we admit that improving papers before they see the harsh light of day is one (though not the only) function of peer review, then post-publication measures come up short, don't they? By design, they hit a paper once it's been enshrined in the scholarly record as final.
>
> I still think it quite possible to come up with peer-review systems that take advantage of the breadth of reviewing talent available via the Internet to improve the quality of the scholarly record while avoiding some of the cronyism, bias, and outright error that plague the existing system. Unless we acknowledge all the functions of peer review, though, whatever systems we come up with will not serve even as well as the present one.

Three days later, Salo offers critical comments on a new book on OA, noting that it lacks an essay on what open access will do to and for libraries. She's working on a proper review; these are notes along the way. I can't do them justice (and haven't seen the book); the post, "Libraries and open access," appears September 6 and **justifies reading** on its own merits.

A Handful of DigitalKoans

Charles W. Bailey, Jr. has been posting useful essays including these four, **well worth reading:**

- "How can scholars retain copyright rights?" (July 3, 2006, with a "More" on July 4) offers the list of exclusive rights provided by copyright and basic strategies for dealing with copyright transfer agreements. It's easiest to choose a narrow rights license (magazine agreements are typically very narrow; ALA divisional publications offer both an appropriate narrow license and a less appropriate copyright assignment); if that's not possible, you'll need to *amend* the agreement you're offered—or replace it entirely. Bailey links to examples in each case.
- "Open access to books: The case of the *Open Access Bibliography*" (July 9, 2006) discusses 16 months' experience with Bailey's book of that title, published as a $45 print book and as a freely available PDF version (under the CC Attribution-NonCommercial 2.0 license). Bibliographies reach narrow audiences and only a fairly small group really *cares* about OA. "The question is: Was it worth putting up all of those free digital versions of the books and creating these auxiliary digital materials?" (Bailey provided separate PDFs of key portions at additional sites, HTML versions of some portions, and eventually an HTML version of the whole bibliography.) The numbers are convincing (Bailey doesn't provide print sales, but as he notes, "most scholarly publishers would be delighted to sell 500 copies of a specialized bibliography.") In the *first three months*, the book was downloaded more than 29,000 times in PDF form—with another 15,000 since then. In all, more than 44,500 copies of the complete book and more than 31,000 sections have been distributed. That's impact!
- "The American Library Association and open access" (July 23, 2006) is a detailed analysis of the topic—both at the mission level and in terms of actual performance. While there are two gold OA journals (one of which isn't listed on ALA's periodicals page), most divisionals are green OA (most support self-archiving). "As a whole, the American Library Association appears to support the open access movement to a limited extent. If this is incorrect and its support is strong, ALA appears to be having difficulty making its commitment visible and "walking the talk." That's true—and the first thing ALA could *and should* do is scrap the copyright assignment agreement altogether and use the copyright license agreement or even narrower licenses.
- "Overcoming obstacles to launching and sustaining non-traditional-publisher open access journals" appeared on August 14. Bailey notes the long history of such journals, back at least to 1987, and that new open source journal digital publishing systems make it more attractive to start up OA journals. But there are still obstacles: Such journals are new, digital-only, typically lack branding, typically publish fewer articles, may not be indexed well, may

lack citation impact, still require copy editing, and may "depend on the continued interest of their founders." He offers comments and in some cases suggestions to overcome these obstacles, concluding that OA journals are more likely to succeed and survive "if they are produced by a formal digital publishing program that has the firm backing of a nonprofit organization." The copy editing point may need repeating: It's not too difficult to set up a peer review system, but good copyediting requires skill and time. "Novice editors can easily underestimate how much copy editing is required to produce a high-quality journal and how demanding this can be."

Other Notes

In "Open access, quo vadis?" (July 12, 2006, *The parachute*), Jan Velterop concludes that "open access is just not all that attractive to individual researchers when they publish their articles." He says that "with pain in my heart." He goes on to note proposed mandates—but then he goes off track, as far as I'm concerned. He agrees that research funders "have the power to impose OA on their grantees, and maybe the duty." Followed by this gem:

> And as they mostly pay the bill for library subscriptions anyway (indirectly, via overhead charges of institutions, but they pay nonetheless), they could simply re-route that money to OA article processing charges and reform publishing in the process.

There's the Velterop Formula for Assured Springer Wealth: Rip off the libraries. First is the questionable assumption that most library subscriptions are funded in a way that can be traced back to NIH, Wellcome, or other research funding institutions. Second is the direct suggestion: re-route that money.

If you take the view cited by at least one economist that the main purpose of academic libraries is to provide journal articles, and if the first assumption could be proven, maybe that suggestion is reasonable—if you're willing to abandon other library functions. I'm not. Velterop wants to "flip the model" and makes the highly questionable claim that assured funding for high-priced author-pays publication would cause "real competition" and "put downward pressure on prices and upward pressure on efficiencies." How so? Journals don't follow standard economic models, because each one is a monopoly. Velterop calls this "reforming publication," but as long as that "reform" assures the huge profits and overheads of commercial publishers *at the explicit expense of academic libraries*, it's the kind of reform Tammany Hall would love.

Francis Ouellette posted a hard-hitting list of "Top 10 things you should [d]o to support the Open Access of scientific publications" at bioinformatics.ubc.ca/ouellette/open_access/top_ten/. Some of them:

> 10. Publish in OA journals.
>
> 7. Only review for OA journals [and for OA articles in hybrid journals]
>
> 2. When reviewing papers, give the authors a hard time for citing closed access publications when there are better ones that are OA.
>
> 1. If you are looking for a position in Academia, and you find yourself in front of a departmental chair- person that tells you they will not grant you tenure if you publish in OA journals, don't take that job.

The suggestions may be extreme (especially "8. Move to a country that has signed the Berlin Declaration on Open Access"), but they're worth thinking about.

Lisa Janicke Hinchliffe posts "You can change a contract" at *ACRLog* on October 5, 2006. She discusses advice in the ACRL *Scholarly Communication Toolkit* on modifying contracts and offers her own experiences. She's been offered interesting reasons for copyright-assignment contracts; she's learned to respond. "The reality is of course that to negotiate from a position of real strength, you have to be willing to walk away from the opportunity…" Hinchliffe thinks we need more success stories and offers her own.

It's a hard road in some cases but, I agree, a necessary one. Within the last two years, I had one case in which a minor piece—already written—was signed away because of a promise I'd already made (see, Dorothea, it happens to all of us). *It won't happen again* if I can possibly help it.

When a publisher *wants* a copyright assignment, offer a fair alternative (see Charles W. Bailey, Jr.'s advice) and explain why you're offering it. If the publisher insists, insist back. This does require that you be willing to walk away—to lose the publication offer. But you know what? There are other places to publish, places that *do* offer narrow rights assignments. I absolutely agree with Hinchliffe's closing:

> I think we need to share our stories and not just principles if our community is going to move forward on this. I look forward to hearing from others.

Andy Powell posted "Pushing an OpenDOAR" at *eFoundations* on October 27, 2006. OpenDOAR is a

directory of open access repositories that now has a search service based on Google's Custom Search Engine. The announcement for the services says:

> It is well known that a simple full-text search of the whole web will turn up thousands upon thousands of junk results, with the valuable nuggets of information often being lost in the sheer number of results.

Powell wondered about that assumption: "simply repeating it over and over doesn't necessarily make it true!" So he selected ten papers from eprints.org, as randomly as he could, and used the title of the paper to construct a known-item search on the OpenDOAR interface and on Google.

The results are interesting if anecdotal (as Powell admits): Google did just fine, even without phrase searching. Twice Google did significantly better than OpenDOAR (the paper showed up third or fifth in Google, *not* in the top ten at OpenDOAR). Twice OpenDOAR did better, but in both cases the paper was within the top five at Google. The other six papers were #1 on both engines. Powell concludes that full-text exposure to the web search engines is critical—as are consistent links. As for metadata, it's important—but not primarily for regular searching.

Offtopic Perspective

50-Movie All Stars Collection, Part 2

In case you missed Part 1, I should note that this all-stars, all-color collection from the 1960s through 1980s is [almost] all TV movies. Not that TV movies are bad things, to be sure—but that explains how you can buy 50 fairly recent movies for $20! (I've omitted sleeve timings; most movies shown in 90-minute time slots show "90 minutes" although actual times are 1:12 to 1:16. Longer TV movies [1:30 to 1:37] usually show the correct running time on the sleeve.)

Disc 7

The Pride of Jesse Hallum, 1981, color, Gary Nelson (dir.), Johnny Cash, Brenda Vaccaro, Eli Wallach. 1:37.

> Johnny Cash plays Jesse Hallum, an illiterate coal minor who must move to Cleveland so his daughter can have surgery for scoliosis. After he admits to being illiterate (to Eli Wallach as an aging owner of a produce distribution company, where Hallum gets a menial job), he lowers his pride enough so that vice principal Brenda Vaccaro (daughter of the produce man) can teach him to read. Well done, but the print is dark and occasionally damaged. Even with that, it's worth $1.25.

Voyage of the Yes, 1973, color, Lee H. Katzin (dir.), Desi Arnaz, Jr., Mike Evans, Scoey Mitchell, Della Reese, Beverly Garland. 1:15.

> I was immediately put off by Arnaz and Evans (both sitcom veterans) mauling "El Condor Pasa" under the titles. The story's absurd: A spoiled high-school grad with his own sailboat wants to sail to Hawaii before entering Stanford, but he's such a charmer that none of his friends will go along and his parents won't let him sail solo. Enter Evans, who's fleeing because he accidentally killed his abusive uncle (Scoey Mitchell, who like Della Reese gets about five minutes in the picture); Arnaz picks him up as a hitchhiker and takes him along. Events ensue, naturally, with distrust, storms, near-death, and bonding…great scenery, acceptable acting. If you can completely turn off your logic switch, not bad; the video quality is very good. $0.75.

Cry of the Innocent, 1980, color, Michael O'Herlihy (dir.), Rod Taylor, Joanna Pettet, Nigel Davenport, Cyril Cusack. 1:33.

> A Frederick Forsyth thriller, made (and set) in Ireland, and quite well done. Taylor's an insurance man who used to be some sort of operative. On holiday, he's out of the house when a plane crashes into the house, killing his family. The crash turns out to have been intentional, with machinations involving a multinational corporation. Taylor turns the tables on hired guns out to get him. Good video quality, Cusack's charming as a laid-back Irish police officer, Taylor and Pettet are OK. Good enough to be a second feature. $1.50.

All the Kind Strangers, 1974, color, Burt Kennedy (dir.), Stacy Keach, Samantha Eggar, John Savage, Robby Benson, Arlene Farber. 1:13.

> I'm not sure what to say about this one. Photojournalist Keach picks up a kid carrying heavy groceries, delivers him to a house way off in the woods, is forced to accept a dinner invitation when the car won't start. The household consists of seven children—and a woman in the kitchen they call Mom, who writes "HELP" in the flour she's working with, when they're alone for a moment (in a kitchen with a lock outside the door and barred windows). The kids don't have any parents, and pick up kind strangers who either act as their parents or are "voted out." Moderately chilling, but it doesn't go anywhere—the ending basically falls apart. Benson's better than usual and the video quality is good. The picture, though, is a real disappointment. Being generous, I'll say $1.00.

Disc 8

Children of the Night, 1985, color, Robert Markowitz (dir.), Kathleen Quinlan, Nicholas Campbell, Mario Van Peebles. 1:33

> The first problem with this movie on Disc 8 of this collection is on Disc 5: *Hustling* is a *much* better flick dealing with the same subculture. This time, instead of an investigative reporter and "people who really make

money from prostitution" as a running plot, there's a sociology grad student and "the plight of teenage prostitutes" as the running plot. Like the other disc, this one's too dark (that is, underlit) for its own good and based on a true story—but not as well acted, a lead character who's a lot harder to take, and generally not all that good. $0.75.

Maybe I'll Come Home in the Spring, 1971, color, Joseph Sargent (dir.), Sally Field, David Carradine, Eleanor Parker, Jackie Cooper, Lane Bradbury. 1:14.

Sally Field as a runaway late-teen who's come back to her wealthy suburban household after a year in a hippie commune of sorts. David Carradine (mostly in flashbacks) as her sociopathic hippie boyfriend. Eleanor Parker and Jackie Cooper as Suburban Parents from Hell, with drink always in hand and just wanting to avoid any problems—and Lane Bradbury as the younger daughter doing pills and ready to run away. Messages about the dangers of meth, I think, and lots of Sally Field being Sally Field (which is not a bad thing). David Carradine makes a great worthless jerk. $1.25.

Incident on a Dark Street, 1973, color, Buzz Kulik (dir.), James Olson, David Canary, Robert Pine, Richard Castellano, William Shatner, David Doyle, Kathleen Lloyd. 1:36.

If this wasn't a Crusading Young U.S. Attorneys episode, or a show within some series along those lines, it should have been. Strong TV-actor cast (if you can get past Bill Shatner's silly moustache—hey, at least he's a corrupt official), lots of plot, better than it has any right to be. $1.25.

A Tattered Web, 1971, color, Paul Wendkos (dir.), Lloyd Bridges, Frank Converse, Sallie Shockley, Murray Hamilton, Broderick Crawford. 1:14.

Heroes and villains: Bridges runs the acting gamut from A to B in his role as a veteran police detective who tries to run his daughter's life, discovers his son-in-law is having an affair, accidentally kills the other woman, and sets out to frame a homeless drunk for the murder. The best performances are probably Murray Hamilton as the other police detective—and Broderick Crawford as the homeless drunk. Frank Converse is serviceable as the son-in-law. $1.00.

Disc 9

They Call It Murder, 1971, color, Walter Grauman (dir.), Jim Hutton, Jo Ann Pflug, Edward Asner, Jessica Walter, Leslie Nielsen, Vic Tayback. 1:35

Based on an Erle Stanley Gardner story, this appears to be a pilot for a show featuring Jim Hutton as a DA—but not Ellery Queen. Apart from the fine cast, it's a well-done murder mystery with enough red herrings to keep it interesting. Good picture and sound. $1.75.

Firehouse, 1973, color, Alex March (dir.), Richard Roundtree, Michael Lerner, Paul Le Mat, Richard Jaeckel, Andrew Duggan, Vince Edwards. 1:14

Roundtree plays the first black in a New York firehouse—replacing a firefighter who died in a fire set by black arsonists. Roundtree's character lets a black arsonist get away at one point, which doesn't help matters. A great cast, but the script doesn't work nearly as well as it could. $1.25.

James Dean, 1976, color, Robert Butler (dir.), Michael Brandon, Stephen McHattie, Brooke Adams, Katherine Helmond, Meg Foster, Amy Irving, Jayne Meadows, Heather Menzies. 1:34.

Michael Brandon plays William Bast, an actor who was Dean's roommate. Bast wrote the biopic and Brandon narrates. While lauding Dean's acting ability, the picture certainly doesn't whitewash his character issues. The only reason this doesn't get a full $2 is some sound distortion early in the flick. Well done, worth watching. $1.75.

Moon of the Wolf, 1972, color, Daniel Petrie (dir.), David Janssen, Barbara Rush, Bradford Dillman. 1:15.

David Janssen makes a great upstanding sheriff in a Louisiana bayou town, coping with odd murders and a town that's distinctly Upper Crust and Everyone Else—and the returned-home daughter of the Upper Crust family has eyes for him, which her patrician brother doesn't appreciate. Good cast, well acted, a little talky but compelling, good picture and sound. I'm giving it full value despite one slightly implausible running plot issue: The half-crazed dying old man keeps saying something like "lukearuke," and nobody recognizes what he's saying until the upper-crust lady visits him and hears "loupe garou," which is to say "werewolf," which [SPOILER] is, of course, who's been doing the murders. Maybe back in the 1970s, you could reasonably assume that Cajuns wouldn't recognize that word. I picked it up the first time I heard "lukearuke," and I sure don't speak French—but then, I had the title of the TV movie as a clue. $2.

Disc 10

A Real American Hero, 1978, color, Lou Antonio (dir.), Brian Dennehy, Forrest Tucker, Ken Howard, Brian Kerwin, Sheree North, Lane Bradbury. 1:34.

The stick-wielding sheriff in the "Walking Tall" movies, Buford Pusser, played here by Dennehy, in a plot that deals with bad moonshine, a double-crossing worker in the sheriff's office, a reformed call girl who the Proper Ladies force to stay in Her Part of Town by using obsolete statutes—and Pusser using other obsolete laws to legally harass a bad guy. Ken Howard makes a great villain. Not great, but watchable, albeit with some picture and sound flaws (and huge lapses in logic). $1.

Get Christie Love, 1974, color, William A. Graham (dir.), Teresa Graves, Harry Guardino, Louise Sorel, Ron Rifkin. 1:14

Remember Teresa Graves from *Laugh-In*? First black woman hired in a major city police department, goes

undercover to take down a major narcotics operation, great costumes, great attitude. It became a one-year series. Very much of its time, but not bad at all. $1.25.

Born to be Sold, 1981, color, Burt Brinckerhoff (dir.), Lynda Carter, Harold Gould, Dean Stockwell, Sharon Farrell, Lloyd Haynes. 1:36.

The title may tell you most of what you need to know: this is a "social crisis of the week" movie. Lynda Carter is an overworked social worker; one pregnant 14-year-old client maybe doesn't want to carry through with the adoption agreement. Turns out there's a baby-farming operation for high-priced private adoptions. Carter manages to crack it, of course (and the client winds up pregnant *again*). Lynda Carter's always a pleasure to watch and Dean Stockwell always makes a good villain—but this one just feels tired. $1, charitably.

The Hanged Man, 1974, color, Michael Caffey (dir.), Steve Forrest, Dean Jagger, Will Geer, Sharon Acker, Brendon Boon, Cameron Mitchell. 1:13.

A gunslinger who might be innocent of the current charge but certainly killed others gets hanged. But it doesn't quite take: He revives and seems to be able to read minds under some circumstances (which doesn't seem to have much to do with the plot). Seeking redemption of sorts, he gets involved in a mining-claim war between the swaggering evil mining baron and a beautiful widow with a spunky son. I know, I know—but for some reason, I found this Western eminently watchable, quite possibly workable as the lower half of a double bill. Maybe it's the excellent video quality and sere western landscape: It just felt right. $2.

Disc 11

Evel Knievel, 1971, color, Marvin J. Chomsky (dir.), George Hamilton, Sue Lyon, Bert Freed, Rod Cameron. 1:28.

Even the sleeve blurb (which spells Knievel's first name "Evil") has to take a slap at Hamilton, "The ever-tanned and charismatic," who also produced. George Hamilton as Evel Knievel? Surprisingly, at least as I watched, it works pretty well—and it's a nicely done movie. The blurb says Vic Tayback was in the movie, but if he was, the part was so small it's not credited in IMDB or listed in the movie's credits. Some damage reduces what's otherwise a pretty good flick. $1.25.

Stunts, 1977, color, Mark J. Lester (dir.), Robert Forster, Fiona Lewis, Ray Sharkey, Joanna Cassidy, Bruce Glover. Richard Lynch. 1:29.

Death and peril in stunt work on an action flick where the director's wife is sleeping with stuntmen. Gee, who could the real murderer be? Interesting stunt work, not much else. $1.00

Murder Once Removed, 1971, color, Charles S. Dubin (dir.), John Forsythe, Richard Kiley, Reta Shaw, Joseph Campanella, Wendell Burton, Barbara Bain. 1:14.

A slick triple-cross murder mystery, with Barbara Bain in a classic femme fatale role and John Forsythe as a doctor who has a bad habit of killing off patients for his own gain. There's a lot more to it than that; for plot and only slight overacting (Forsythe and Bain chew as little scenery as I've ever seen), I'd give it a higher rating but for damage. $1.25.

The Strangers in 7A, 1972, color, Paul Wendkos (dir.), Andy Griffith, Ida Lupino, Michael Brandon, James A. Watson Jr., Tim McIntire, Susanne Hildur. 1:14.

The blurb calls Griffith's role "uncharacteristically sleazy"—but although he plays a discouraged, married apartment building super willing to be seduced by a hot chick in a very short skirt, he winds up being the hero anyway. (The blurb also says he's a landlord, which is a *hugely* different thing than a super!). Reasonably well plotted and Michael Brandon makes a pretty good villain, but it's all a little tired. $1.00.

Disc 12

Out, 1982, Eli Hollander (dir.), Peter Coyote, O-Lan Jones, Jim Haynie, Scott Beach, Danny Glover, Grandfather Semu Haute. Title "Deadly Drifter" appears before title sequence. 1:23.

What's this movie about? It's about 83 minutes: An old joke, but the most applicable one in this case. After a bewildering viewing experience, a bit less so because the "experimental" nature of the film became fairly obvious, a visit to IMDB was helpful. This is probably misplaced in the megapack: It's certainly not a standard "TV movie" (particularly not with certain key language early on that isn't acceptable on network TV, but perfectly appropriate to the flick). It's an indie—a *little* indie: IMDB says the total budget was $25,000, including blowup to 35mm, and that most actors worked for free. Great cast, pretty much incomprehensible plot having something to do with underground conspiracies and ESP. I think. "Deadly Drifter" was apparently added by a distributor; the director *hates* it, as it's misleading. The jacket blurb calls this a comedy, but that doesn't work either (particularly with at least one implied murder). Read the outraged rave reviews at Amazon: Maybe you have to have eyes to hear and ears to see what this picture's really about. Or, to put it in a timely fashion: Far out, man. (The movie's 12 years after its time—and I *do* remember the 60s.) $0.75.

Good Against Evil, 1977, color, Paul Wendkos (dir.), Dack Rambo, Elyssa Davalos, Richard Lynch, Dan O'Herlihy, Kim Cattrall. 1:24.

Start: A mother gives birth and is somehow frightened into falling down stairs and dying. A shadowy figure notes that the baby is Theirs Now. Next: Baby all grown up, independent young woman, meets guy, they fall in love…but, oops, she's supposed to marry Satan. Things get really confusing—and she winds up disappearing, while the guy finds *another* Satan-bound child and a

priest exorcises that one, sound effects and all. Meanwhile, the woman's gone, and the sometimes-interesting movie trails off in a pointless cloud of talk. Why? It was a pilot for a TV series, presumably chasing the woman and her evil captors. Fortunately, the series never got made. Decent cast, mediocre acting, *no ending*. Arrggh… $0.75.

Congratulations, It's a Boy, 1971, color, William A. Graham (dir.), Bill Bixby, Diane Baker, Karen Jensen, Jack Albertson, Ann Sothern, Darrell Larson, Tom Bosley. 1:13.

Bill Bixby as swingin' bachelor as they were supposed to be in the early '70s—until a young man turns up who he fathered in a one-night stand. Various melodramatic hijinks ensue. But look at the cast: This crew couldn't make a really bad movie, and it's mostly pleasant enough fluff. $1.00.

Snowbeast, 1977, color, Herb Wallerstein (dir.), Bo Svenson, Yvette Mimieux, Robert Logan, Clint Walker, Sylvia Sidney. 1:26.

Set in a ski resort town (Sylvia Sidney as the matriarch of the principal resort) starting the annual festival that keeps the town working—when a young woman disappears and the matriarch's son (and manager of the resort) finds a bloody jacket. As the plot progresses, it's clear there's a "snowbeast" on the loose—maybe not a Sasquatch, because everyone knows they're all gentle creatures, and this one's a semi-intelligent killer. Great scenery, lots of ski and snow scenes, and the picture's better than it has any right to be. $1.25, mostly for the scenery.

Disc 13

The New Adventures of Heidi, 1978, color, Ralph Senensky (dir.), Burl Ives, Katy Kurtzman, John Gavin, Marlyn Mason, Sherrie Wills. 1:38.

I like family pictures, at least some of them, but this one's way too treacly for my taste—and, I'd guess, almost anyone else's taste in 2006. The plot summary on the sleeve is just plain wrong. Heidi's separated from her grandfather (Ives) because he's apparently died—and her "despicable relatives" turn her over to a wealthy-but-busy widowed hotelier (Gavin) whose troubled daughter is a boon companion. They go to New York, and naturally goodness triumphs over all. The sleeve also mentions "ten delightful original songs," but "delightful" is not the word I would use for the pallid ballads. Ives used to be a fine singer; not in this flick. $0.75, *very* charitably.

The Borrowers, 1973, color, Walter C. Miller (dir.), Eddie Albert, Tammy Grimes, Dame Judith Anderson, Karen Pearson. 1:21.

The first of three TV movie (and one movie) versions of the Mary Norton novel about the borrowers, or rather one family of borrowers: Little people (about six inches high) who borrow space and possessions from the humans in the house. In this case, the house is a mansion and the lady of the house is a lively, bedridden, tippling Dame Judith Anderson, who enjoys chatting with the father of the borrowers (Albert) but assumes he's a hallucination. The sleeve gets it wrong here too: "Now they must frantically avoid being captured and exhibited as scientific curiosities." More like they must escape a ferret set to get rid of the vermin the housekeeper assumes them to be. Didn't anyone at Treeline (now Mill Creek) ever watch these things? I know: Not bloody likely. Anyway, a first-rate cast, well acted, *not* treacly. I'd give it a higher price but for one bit of cheapness that unfortunately comes in opening scenes: Albert's scuttling across the living room floor of the mansion to go back under the clock (and under the floorboards, where they live)—but *he casts no shadow* even when standing next to a heavily-shadow-casting door. Green screen is one thing, but doing it that baldly and badly *right at the start*… $1, for that and for some damage; otherwise, probably $1.50.

Conclusions

I count two winners, four more good enough that I'll probably watch them again, eight more pretty good and possibly worth watching again ($1.25), seven fair, and five mediocre. None among these 26 ranked down with the five real dogs in the first 24, and the total ($31.25) beats the first 24's adjusted total ($26.75: I inadvertently left the $0.75 rating off one mediocre TV movie in the first 24). That comes to $58 for a set that now sells for $14 to $20.

For the set as a whole, I come up with 14 recommendable movies, from *James Dean* to *The Hanged Man*. All in all, not bad.

Masthead

Cites & Insights: Crawford at Large, Volume 6, Number 14, Whole Issue 84, ISSN 1534-0937, a journal of libraries, policy, technology and media, is written and produced by Walt Crawford, a senior analyst at OCLC.

Cites & Insights is sponsored by YBP Library Services, http://www.ybp.com.

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