Cites & Insights

Crawford at Large

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Volume 6, Number 9: July 2006 ISSN 1534-0937 Walt Crawford

Bibs & Blather

Looking at Liblogs: You Can Help

I still don't much care for "biblioblogosphere." For one thing, there are loads of "biblio" blogs—that is, blogs about books—outside of blogs written by library people. For another, "sphere" implies something I don't necessarily agree with. So I'm using "liblogs," also less than ideal since it could apply to blogs from libraries. There isn't a perfect word. Life is like that.

I plan to do another investigation of sorts, probably significantly different from last year's. I haven't started work on it (and won't until after ALA), and I haven't made final decisions about how and what. There are two things that libbloggers out there can do to help, or at least to clarify.

- **Want to opt out?** If you don't want your blog included, send email to **citesandinsights@gmail.com** or **waltcrawford@gmail.com** with the subject heading **Liblog optout**, and give the name of your blog and an email address I can use to verify that it's you and not someone else. (If anyone *does* "opt out" for someone else's blog, I will do my best to publicly humiliate you, on *Walt at random* and elsewhere.) You don't need to provide a reason. (This year's piece will be less "hierarchical" than last year's, and I can't imagine why you'd want to be excluded, but it's your blog and your business.) If you opt out, your blog just won't appear or be mentioned. Period. Email should reach me by July 15, 2006.
- **Usage numbers?** I'd like to try to correlate Bloglines subscription counts with direct/indirect readership. You can help, if you have access to stats for your weblog. I won't name names or provide individual figures, but if I get enough numbers, I may do a paragraph or two about correlations. Here's what you can do to help:

  1. Find two figures for May 2006: The **average sessions per day** (or total sessions: I can divide by 31), which is almost always easy to find, and the **unique visitors** during the month—or "unique IP addresses" in most cases. Sometimes that's a little harder to find.

     In a standard Urchin install, go to Domains and Users, then IP Addresses. The first page will have text something like "**IP Addresses (1-10) / 1,930**." The number after the slash is the number I want—in this case, 1,930. (That's the number for the week of June 4-10 for *Walt at random*, if you're wondering.)

     In a standard Weblog Expert install, it should be right on the General Statistics page, as "**Total Unique IPs**."

     I know it's readily available in WebTrends, and should be available in most any statistics package.

  2. Send email to **citesandinsights@gmail.com** or **waltcrawford@gmail.com** with the subject line **Liblog usage**, and include in the body the name of the blog and the two figures (clarifying whether sessions are average per day or total for May 2006).

  3. Email should reach me by July 31, 2006.

Inside This Issue

That's it. I hope not to get any optouts, but will honor whatever I do get and can verify. I hope to get at least 15 or 20 of the second category. As Gmail users can guess, I'm using the subject lines so I don't have to gather up lots of individual emails; I should wind up with one "conversation" in each category, or at least I can tag them all automatically.

Thanks. Oh, by the way, if you have a liblog—not an official library blog—that you think I'll overlook

because it's not listed in any of the typical places, you could also send appropriate email.

The Last C&I—According to Plan

As planned for some time, this is the last *substantive* issue for a while—until the September issue in mid- to late August (when I anticipate doing the "Looking at Liblogs" report). Of course, plans could change. I've been reminded lately of how much things can change. For example, this is also the last *C&I* to list me as a senior analyst at RLG; as of July 1, I'll be working for OCLC.

There *will* be an August issue (again, if plans don't change), but most of you can skip it without wondering what you've missed. I plan to discuss and illustrate the typography and design of *C&I* (both the PDF and HTML forms); I don't plan to discuss much of anything else.

Enjoy the summer. I certainly intend to.

Chunky Again

For some reason, I always feel odd about "chunky" issues—issues with fewer than six sections. I'm not sure why that is, except for a sense that there should be a variety of topics in each issue. This is a chunky issue—not as chunky as some (there's more than one essay), but chunky still.

Assuming readership and download/HTML read figures are similar, my odd feelings aren't warranted. The most widely read issue ever was also the chunkiest issue ever, with one 32-page essay. The second most widely read issue was also one big essay. This issue *could* consist of one big essay but I wanted to have a little variety. And so it goes.

Perspective

Finding a Balance: Libraries and Librarians

Library 2.0 *versus* Library 1.0. Professional librarians *versus* other library staff. Technology *versus* books. NexGen *versus* BabyBoomer *versus* Millenials. None of those oppositions makes sense in the real world, but it's easy to find yourself one side or the other, even though in many cases there are no clear-cut sides.

Think of this set of stories as my re-entry into the set of discussions around Library 2.0. Think of it as a follow-up to a discussion at *LISNews*, where I suggested that life was frequently a matter of grays rather than blacks and whites and was taken to task by two others who claimed everything was black and white if you just understood it thoroughly. Think of it as a library followup to last issue's essay on balance in copyright. Think of this as a strange hybrid of THE LIBRARY STUFF and NET MEDIA encased in a group of narratives. As is frequently the case with PERSPECTIVES, I've been saving blog posts and other items that struck a nerve, and eventually found that some of them fit together in a manner I hadn't anticipated.

Three editorial notes. First, I'm correcting clear spelling and grammatical errors when quoting directly from blog posts rather than [sic]ing them. The immediacy and informality of blogs tend to result in more casual spelling and grammar—and most blog editors don't provide much help. Second, I try to use *both* of a writer's names on first occurrence, unless a last name isn't clearly available on a blog. I'll generally use a last name for the rest of a discussion, but not always—and I try to avoid first names unless I've met the person face-to-face. On both points, consistency isn't my strong suit. Finally, most subheadings (the italicized flush-left level) are blog post titles or article titles—and I rarely provide the URL, since those are easy to locate given a blog's name and post date.

Biases and Benchmarks

I don't react well to evangelism. That's a problem in dealing with Paul Miller or Stevan Harnad or, sometimes, Michael Stephens. I don't react well to universalisms—statements that sound like "*all* libraries and librarians *must* do X or they will become irrelevant" raise my hackles. I'm not wild about gengen either—facile generalizations about generational differences. I tend to regard manifestos as collections of generalizations and universalisms that represent poor substitutes for nuanced discussion. I'm deeply suspicious of claims that American public libraries are failing or becoming irrelevant: I think they go against all available evidence.

I favor change (when appropriate) and adore good uses of technology—I've been a change agent and technologist throughout my career. But I also favor continuity and have a healthy respect for established methods as worthy of consideration, not veneration.

For the last 38 years (and until the end of June 2006), my entire workday career has been in support of academic libraries—but in many ways my heart is in public libraries. As remarkable as America's net-

works of academic libraries are, America's array of public libraries may be even more remarkable.

Benchmarks? That comes down to tradeoffs. Every new service, medium, or device requires time, money, attention, or some combination of the three. Many public libraries (and most librarians) lack vast wells of surplus time, money, and attention. That means that in some cases, old services, media or devices must be neglected or abandoned in favor of new services, media or devices. That's true both directly and indirectly; you can never change just one thing.

When choices must be made, benchmarks are in order. At what point does a service, medium or device serve such a small portion of a library's clientele that it can safely be abandoned, especially if a comparable service, medium or device is available?

Here, I believe a benchmark has been suggested, and by one of the field's most enthusiastic proponents of change: If a service, medium or device still provides at least 2% of the traffic for a class of service, or still serves at least 2% of the library's patrons, then it continues to be a worthwhile service, medium or device—*even if comparable services, media or devices are available*. Who suggested such a powerful bar against dropping tired old ideas? None other than Michael Stephens (with support from Sarah Houghton and Amanda Etches-Johnson).

Read the April 17, 2006 *Tame the web* post "Self-monitoring questions: A report on IM reference"—and the April 18, 2006 *Librarianinblack* post "Practical side of IM reference." In the first, Stephens provides figures for IM reference transactions at one medium-sized public library and as a *percentage* of total reference transactions. That percentage, as reported by month from April 2005 through March 2006, peaked at 1.62% in December 2005, then settled down in a range from 1.18% to 1.28% in early 2006. The next day, Sarah Houghton provided similar figures for usage at her former library—and the percentage (1 to 2%) was similar. Amanda Etches-Johnson did a talk "IM @ Mac: where we've been" about her institution's experience with IM reference. Except for December (which clearly had much lower than usual overall reference use), IM reference ran right around 1.5% of all reference service. Etches-Johnson notes that IM reference takes about three times as long as face-to-face reference, but that's another issue.

All three regard IM reference as a success; I'll take their word for it. IM reference isn't the only way to get reference help without coming to the library, given telephone and email reference (and possibly virtual reference, another animal altogether). This works just as well the other way around. To suggest otherwise is to say that the new takes precedence over the old for no other reason than its newness, an attitude I find unsupportable in a profession that should be devoted to the continuity of the record of humankind's achievements, thoughts, and stories.

Real Discussion

Most "Library 2.0"-related discussion over the past few months has been *real* discussion—that is, discussion of issues, possibilities, philosophies, problems—rather than rallying cries to jump on a bandwagon or disputation over a name and its novelty. This is, I believe, a good thing. (If you'd like to review the work of "Library 2.0" skeptics since the special *C&I*, your best source is Steve Lawson's "A Library 2.0 skeptic's reading list," posted May 26, 2006 at *See also…*) This subgroup includes items that don't seem to fit in one of the other subgroups

Much L2 or Library 2.0 discussion

Tim Hodson at *Information takes over* posted this on March 23. A key quote:

> I think that all this discussion…is highlighting an awareness of the need to constantly re-evaluate our services. If nothing else, the L2 discussion has prompted countless librarians to take a look at what they do and think, "hey, we could do that!"

Yes, libraries (that is, groups of librarians and other staff working within an institution) need periodic re-evaluation of services—as long as that doesn't become either a standing joke ("here's the annual service appropriateness checklist!"), an endless exercise in navel-gazing, or such a time-sink that no energy is available for useful changes. The second sentence is right on the money: The best library leadership leads by example, and good examples of successful web-based services can expand success stories manyfold.

The slow and steady approach to technology planning

Jeff (Hall? Stauffer?) posted this on March 28, 2006 at *BlogJunction*, WebJunction's group blog. He discussed a presentation by Diane Mayo and Deborah Duke during the PLA National Conference:

> For me, the most interesting "lesson learned" from the Fort Worth experience was "It's OK not to be on the cutting edge" of technology.
>
> I think this is really worth keeping in mind as we contemplate the inevitable delays in the release of Windows Vista, and reflect on "flavor of the month" technologies

> that didn't make it. I once worked with a guy who was convinced that the Apple Newton was going to revolutionize the use of technology in libraries. I hear the same claim made of PDAs from time-to-time, and needless to say, I'm still waiting for the revolution.
>
> …As libraries struggle with limited budgetary and staff resources, the "go slow" approach to planning for new technologies may be the best course of action. WebJunction's Technology Watch for Small Libraries list is a great way to keep on top of new technologies and their potential impact on public libraries. Keep reading and learning, and don't be afraid to be a Luddite…

Jeff isn't saying "Ignore all this stuff and just keep doing what you're doing." That's not what WebJunction is all about. It *is* about solutions that can work, especially for the thousands of "small public libraries" (those serving fewer than 25,000 people). "Go slow" doesn't mean "stop"—and "keep reading and learning" offers crucial balance to "don't be afraid to be a Luddite," another way of saying that many informed libraries and librarians need to be able to ignore implied universalisms from supposed leaders. Saying "everybody should be doing X" just doesn't apply to everybody, especially in smaller libraries.

What does WebJunction consider worth tracking? The "Technology Watch" changes every quarter, always offering a quick summary of "what, why, how" and more links for a service or technology. As of this writing, it features podcasting, online office software, "sharing local information digitally" (scanning unique local resources and making them usefully available to the community), blogs as a way to maintain library websites, and thin-client technology. The list also notes previous items still worth watching. The technology list watch committee says this about Library 2: "Our committee says: if you're a small library, the best thing you can do is **focus on small, achievable projects** like those on this list."

Why Google (or Ask or Yahoo!) is good for reference work

Meredith Farkas, *Information wants to be free*, March 29, 2006—a thoughtful post that suggests another aspect of library balance. Good reference librarians can (and should) use web search engines in addition to "real" databases—and should leverage their professional skills to make the best use of these new tools. (I'd change that parenthetic clause to "or Yahoo! or MSN Search or Ask" to match actual usage.)

The 1,000-word post (which has 15 comments totaling another 2,000 words) is well worth reading. I think you're better off with a printed copy, since it's written in essay form and since Farkas' detailed writing deserves rereading.

She rarely *starts* with a web search engine when helping a student—but she notes an actual case and why web search engines make valuable additions to the librarian's repertoire. In this case, the student wanted "scholarly literary criticisms and books about Tom Robbins' work." Some excerpts:

> We really don't have any other databases that specifically find literary criticisms, so I could have spent the next 30 minutes searching various databases looking for stuff about Tom Robbins that was of high enough quality to go into this gal's paper… Instead, I decided to try a trick that I often find useful when doing reference work — depending on the subject. I know that there are people who are big fans and scholars of authors, wars, historical events, and other subjects. Some fans are passionate enough to make bibliographies of all the works they've found on their subject of interest. Sometimes I can do a search in Google/Ask/Yahoo! and find a bibliography on a subject for which it was difficult to find articles doing a regular database search. So I tried doing a search for Tom Robbins and *voila!* The first result was a "fan site" for Tom Robbins complete with a bibliography of his works and works about him (separated into books, magazines and newspapers, scholarly journals, and theses and dissertations). Yes, the bibliography was a bit dated, but still, it was extremely comprehensive for the years it covered. And since the student needed only three more works and their date did not matter, we were sure we'd find plenty of these in the databases or the catalog. The books about Tom Robbins (he was discussed among many other authors) we would never have found in the catalog because he was not a subject term nor was his name mentioned in the title. The articles I may have found had I searched every conceivable database, but it worked a lot better to find the bibliography, check our A-Z product to see if we have the journal, and find the article in the database that journal is held in. While this trick doesn't always work, since there aren't always such fans/scholars for every subject, I find it's often worth trying if I can't find enough stuff in the databases. If I don't find anything, I've usually only expended about 1-3 minutes of time.
>
> This is why I never buy the whole Google/Ask/Yahoo! is something librarians should avoid using bit. I always start with the databases, but the databases don't cover every subject well. Sometimes I can find good things in Google/Ask/Yahoo! because I know what I'm looking for. And I know that my search skills will get better as I face more challenges at the reference desk.
>
> …at my school, with many older staff members, we have the opposite problem [of cases where people rely too much on Google by itself or on web search in general], where some people ONLY search the databases and never venture out on the Web. And sometimes I

> wonder if perhaps people who aren't committed to going the extra mile for their patrons will never make the effort, whether they are search savvy or not. Maybe I'm just a young, overconfident or totally naive librarian, but I honestly think that by being flexible about the resources you use, knowing about your library's databases, relevant Web resources, and search engines, and always being willing to go the extra mile for your patrons, you're going to do pretty good reference work.

Balance again—something at which Farkas is demonstrably expert. "Google is all we need" (or its more common cousin, "Google-style searching is all anyone needs") is nonsense—but so is "Google/Yahoo!/MSN/Ask have no place in library work." Using web search engines with a librarian's knowledge and heuristic—that's *adding* to the library resource set and improving user service. (The "fan site" heuristic is something I hadn't considered, but I'm not a reference librarian.)

Serendipity at risk? and Serendipity and RSS

Ken Varnum, *RSS4lib*, March 31, 2006; Steven M. Cohen, *Library stuff*, April 5, 2006. Varnum notes a newspaper essay by journalism professor William McKeen discussing "the loss of context that has come with Google, RSS aggregators, and much of the Internet." McKeen requires his freshman journalism class to subscribe to the *paper* New York *Times* "because readers of the online version will only find what they're looking for." McKeen goes on:

> Nuance gives life its richness and value and context. If I tell the students to read the business news and they try to plug into it online, they wouldn't enjoy the discovery of turning the page and being surprised. They didn't know they would be interested in the corporate culture of Southwest Airlines, for example. They just happened across that article. As a result, they learned something—through serendipity.
>
> Technology undercuts serendipity. It makes it possible to direct our energies all in the name of saving time… We're efficient, but empty.

Varnum notes, "I rarely stumble on really cool web sites anymore." That's partly because web search results are so big that you don't get "all sorts of hits that were something much better than utterly wrong: they were interesting." Ditto RSS feeds: "While there's still some opportunity for serendipity in the not-so-random choices of my favorite bloggers, it's limited serendipity." Varnum, who supports RSS, notes the balance problem: He's running into less "good stuff that makes me stop and think."

He relates this back to libraries and "Library 2.0": "As we build information systems to enable 'Library 2.0,' we must remain cognizant of overtuning the system. I certainly don't want to find just exactly what I'm looking for all the time…" Varnum suggests we also need to "help people find what they didn't know they were looking for." And, quoting McKeen, "we cannot blame technology… We invented this stuff. We must lead technology, not allow technology to lead us… We must allow ourselves to be surprised."

Cohen agrees that, "At face value, serendipity and aggregators seem like opposites." But, he says, if you're liberal enough with your subscriptions, you can get back some serendipity. "So, can there be serendipity in aggregators? Sure, if you consciously want there to be…" His example of how RSS is "much slicker than reading the newspaper" fails the serendipity test, undercutting his claim. His final sentence is key: "There is no conceivable way that I will ONLY read the Arts section [of the New York *Times*] if I had the physical paper in front of me." Most people just *won't* "haphazardly subscribe" to huge numbers of feeds, any more than most people take more than one daily newspaper: It's just too much stuff.

Are libraries in the serendipity business? Should they be? Those are interesting questions. I'll assert that serendipity is crucial to a balanced life: You need to be aware of things you "don't care about" from time to time. That's one of two reasons I'll mourn the passing of the print daily newspaper if that ever happens. (The other and lesser reason: It's the most effective means for local businesses to communicate with local consumers who didn't realize the business existed, had changed, or had something interesting to offer.)

Library digitization efforts

Jenn Riley, April 5, 2006 at *Inquiring librarian;* it relates to one of WebJunction's current technology watch items. Riley notes one library reaction to the Google Library Project and similar efforts: Librarians "think they need to follow suit by digitizing books in order not to be left behind. I worry that many of these libraries are jumping in just to be on the bandwagon without fully considering where their efforts fit in with those of others." As Riley notes, digitizing books, doing dirty OCR, and using existing metadata is "about as easy as it gets in the digital library world (not that this is exactly a walk in the park)."

What's the problem? "While the costs to the library are lower to digitize already-described, published books…the benefits are also lower than focusing on other types of materials… We already have *reasonable* access to the books in our collec-

tions." There's cataloging, there's ILL, and mass book digitization projects are proceeding. Riley suggests a better course for a typical library (one that has funds and time for digitization efforts):

> Libraries in the aggregate hold almost unimaginably vast amounts of material. We're simply *never* going to get around to digitizing all of it, or even the proportion we would select given any reasonable set of selection guidelines. An enormously small proportion of these materials are the "easy" type - books, published, with MARC records. The huge majority are rare or unique materials: historical photographs, letters, sound recordings, original works of art, rare imprints. These sorts of materials generally have grossly inadequate or no networked method of intellectual discovery. While digitizing and delivering online these collections would take more time, effort and money than published collections, I believe strongly that the increase in benefit greatly outweighs the additional costs. In the end, the impact of focusing our efforts on classes of materials that we currently underserve will be greater than taking the easy road. Our money is better spent focusing on those materials that are held by individual libraries, held by only few or no others, and to which virtually no intellectual access exists. Isn't this preferable to spending our money digitizing published books to which current access is reasonable, if not perfect?

Balance again: Looking beyond what's currently popular and easy to what will best serve the community, defined locally or globally. WebJunction suggests such a strategy for small public libraries; Riley suggests it for libraries in general.

IM, why? and IM? Here's why!

Mark Lindner at *…the thoughts are broken…* kicked off a lively discussion with the first post (April 13, 2006), adding the second two days later. He wondered about Andrea Mercado's seemingly universal suggestion: "So really, if you're a librarian, and you've never used IM, go out and try it… I beg of you, get over this notion that it's new, or scary, or a fad, or just for kids, and just go for it." That's not Andrea's usual style. Lindner used it as an example of "similar views prevalent in the biblioblogosphere." His response: "Many of us non-IMers very legitimately ask, 'IM, *why*?'"

He recounts his difficulties trying to find an available chat name and get an IM client downloaded and working. "Many of us, of any generation, have more important things to do than fight with the massive media companies for the use of their 'free' software." That aside, he questions the rhetorical strategy of simply telling people to go do something:

> [Y]es, there are people who think IM is just a fad, is only for kids, etc. I have no idea what to do with or for those people. But simply telling them to try it will not do it. People like that do *not* "just do it." Maybe this generation or group or whatever they are of pro-IMers needs to learn a bit more about rhetorical strategy. Or maybe IMing leads to a drastically reduced form of rhetoric by its very nature...? Now *that* is an interesting question. Anyway, the rhetorical strategy employed here, and in many other tech-related areas, is not one that will work with many people.

Here's his real question, given in boldface:

> **Why? What communicative purpose would it serve in our lives? What function does it fulfill that isn't already adequately filled in our lives?**

He discusses and possible answers at some length—noting, among other things, that "respect for the others' preferred means of communication" is a two-way street: "If you are so important that you will only allow me to talk with you via IM, then I probably don't need to do so." Lindner notes, *correctly and importantly*, "Few people adopt technologies for which they see no personal need in their lives." He wonders about adding another "distractor." He's planning to try IM—but "I cannot see it filling any communicative need that I *have*."

The comments were fascinating. Jenny Levine informed him, "If people don't have im, I don't end up talking to them as much (and in some cases at all)." Levine doesn't see it "as something I have to work at AT ALL. It's always on in the background." Levine apparently *does* mean "always": "If non-imers realized how much they were missing out on, they might join up! I mean my family members can 'never get ahold of me' but if they had IM they would be able to pretty much 24/7." *Pretty much 24/7*—I don't doubt Levine's word, but the thought of being "in touch" all the time is so at odds with *my* personality that it's almost physically repellent. We're not all the same, we never will be all the same. Some of us want and need our own time and space. I'm usually available via email while at work; I'm usually *not* available by email while at home (or on vacation), since the computer's usually off. That's deliberate.

Another commenter used the generational universalist claim: "Your (eventual) patrons are using IM. The critical mass is there." That commenter went on to slam Lindner: "stop putting up these narcissistic barriers about fulfilling personal needs" (and later apologized for that tone). Others gave excellent reasons that librarians *at work* might use IM—and one agreed that, "If you don't have those needs—or don't

see IM as being the best tool to fill them, then, no, it's not going to work for you."

Lindner's follow-up notes that he can see why *he* should give IM a try. He's still concerned about IM as a distractor, and "Only I can judge whether or not it becomes an operative distractor." For someone else to say "I don't have a problem with this" is meaningless; they're not Lindner. "We need to be very careful about dismissing people's personal experience… To dismiss someone's personal experiences out-of-hand is not a good tactic and, in fact, in my opinion may often even be immoral." I'm with Lindner on this. Feel free to challenge my interpretations. Feel free to suggest I'm going about something the wrong way. But when you *dismiss* my actual experience (or challenge my service ethic or Lindner's), you're going way over the line.

"Let's all remember that learning one of these new tools takes time, and that some are faster at it than others." That seems awfully easy to forget when you're championing the Next Hot Thing, but it's true and important. We all need to find our own balance.

> Many of us feel preached to, we feel degraded, we feel belittled. We do not feel as if it is a conversation, or as if we are being engaged as equals who may need to actually be encouraged (in various ways) so that we may change our views or actions. I feel as if many are making this (IM adoption) among many other things a simple black-and-white affair. We either get it, which makes us a "cool kid," or we don't, which makes us a neo-Luddite, obstinate, or perhaps even narcissistic. Now I know that was said in a moment of frustration…but it points to a certain (and perhaps sometimes justifiable) feeling that is out there. My point is that nothing is that simple and that, while some may deserve to be treated in this manner, many of us deserve better. Heck, all of us deserve better, even the obstinate ones. The point is that preaching and name-calling, intentionally or not, probably is *not a good way to reach people*.

I don't like being YELLED AT, even when followups are calmer. I don't like being told that if A doesn't have a problem with X, then Y or Z or Me can't possibly have a problem with it. Encouraging experimentation is a good thing, as Lindner goes on to say. But that encouragement needs to be balanced by the reality that people have limited time and attention. "They are not…free to belittle or call others names because they don't immediately get the 'Word' from on high."

Balance and rhetoric go hand in hand. Lindner's post is a useful reminder that some of the "straw men" some of us are accused of raising are out there in the real world—and that people can get temporarily overenthused (as apparently happened with Andrea Mercado, who, as she noted in a comment, is normally "more of a 'figure out what you need, then apply the tool to the job' person, not a 'just install it and figure it out later' person").

web 2.0 and library 2.0

A brief one from Woody Evans at *IShush* on April 20, 2006—also one that relates back to the *BlogJunction* post. Evans finds his library "at approximately 'library 1.4.' We do great work in terms of reaching out to staff and students…and we're making slow progress toward being an inviting place to spend time… I'd say our web presence ranks at about 'Web 0.9' though."

Then comes the kicker, worth quoting in full:

> And you know what?
>
> That's okay. Our web sites do what they need to, and we work hard enough in real-time person-to-person contact to more than make up for any lack of virtuality.
>
> Would I like to see an RSS feed at least? IM Reference? A wiki for patron use? Stuff like that? Sure. But is it *oh-my-god-i-gotta-have-it-now* necessary? Hardly.

Evans sees the most important part of Library 2 as "a policy shift toward openness…It's a shift in *attitude and service* toward greater accessibility, if I read things right." That may be more important than the technology of the week and whether it's in place.

A brief discussion on Dewey Decimal (several posts)

Michael Casey began with "Spine labels and de-Dewefication" on May 9, 2006 at *LibraryCrunch*. He names two "sacred cows I would like to see changed" for public libraries: author-name spine labels on hardcover books—and the use of Dewey for non-fiction. For the first, I think Casey has an excellent point: Why is it necessary to add an author-name label to a spine that almost universally *has* the author's name? But then there's the second: "Is Dewey still serving us well in non-fiction?" Casey suggests "subject labels" and that we might be "losing too many users" partly because they're forced to use Dewey.

A *LibraryPlanet* post the next day noted an incident at FLA: "one of the library consultants was showing off photographs of a library that had really nice bookstore display units which are optimized for browsers. When someone asked how someone could actually locate a particular book, she didn't really have an answer." To this writer, it's about locating the books—and Dewey works well for that purpose.

Thom Hickey posted "Scanned books and the DDC" at *Outgoing* a few days later. He noted Kevin Kelly's piece [see elsewhere in this issue], which took

the obligatory "swipe at 'out-of-date schemes like the Dewey Decimal System'" He notes that DDC is designed for books in libraries and suggests that it works well for that purpose.

I'll offer my own experience here—not in libraries (where Dewey works just fine) but in bookstores. *I can't find stuff* in most nonfiction areas because bookstore categories are broad and at least as peculiar as DDC. And because—unlike public libraries—learning how Tower Books has organized nonfiction does me no good when I walk into Printers Ink. Most bookstores don't have dozens of terminals scattered around where you can put in a title and find the subject classification. Thus, you're totally reliant on the staff (and there aren't many of them). I would question abandoning Dewey—broken as it is in some areas—for some other model without a much better understanding of what that model might be. Bookstore arrangement in my public library would yield chaos. I'd never find the books I want or the books that I don't know about that are *like* the books I want—not if a 50,000-book nonfiction collection is organized by author within a dozen "subject" categories.

If you build it, they will come

Rachel Singer Gordon, May 25, 2006 at *The liminal librarian,* writes about the need to get "past our old stories" and tell "a new tale" as a necessary first step in "becoming the people we're meant to be"—but that's personal. She then relates it to libraries:

> Without a clear vision of where we went our libraries or our profession to go—whether we talk about strategic planning or Library 2.0 or 21st century libraries—we're stuck in the story of what we were, not what we need to become. But, any compelling new story has to build on our existing foundations, taking the best bits from our old stories and weaving them into our new vision.

The oddity here is the title, because that's *not* what Gordon is saying. Libraries need to build the new with an understanding of—and incorporation of—the old, using a balanced approach to make good libraries better. Libraries are very much places of stories, and the ongoing story of a library needs to be well-understood and well-stated.

Moving Towards Balance

Balance is important for each of us and for our institutions; a life out of balance catches up with you sooner or later. I see the following as touching on balance, one way or another.

Why bother: the impact of social OPACs

John Blyberg posted this at *blyberg.net* on March 20, 2006, partially responding to a comment by Michael Dunne on the subject of social OPACs. That comment, in part, and noting that Dunne was commenting on a Blyberg post (thus, "he" is Blyberg):

> I have to confess I think he may be right, our library web sites are not places where you want to spend any time, and our OPACs are not fun places to be either. But then again, why should they be? Why should our library web site be a place where our students want to spend time? Is there something missing from their university experience that only our web site can provide? **Why this fear, this sense that, unless we soon get up to speed we are all doomed?** [Emphasis added.]

Blyberg's immediate response is important:

> First, I want to be clear that I don't think we are doomed if we choose not to implement social software in our OPACs. Libraries will not cease to function if we don't address the shortcomings of our online catalogs.

The rest of Blyberg's post addresses the *virtues* of adding community to online catalogs, why it's "okay to consider making our OPACs special… A social element belongs in the OPAC, our users are waiting for it and they'll soak it up like sponges if we give it to them." That's open to question—but we won't know until some libraries have *had* OPACs with social features for a while.

Blyberg also provides specific examples of how community involvement could make an online catalog more valuable and suggests that social OPACs could become valuable assets to libraries. Dunne and Blyberg may both be right, and the differences between academic and public libraries may come into play. (I'm omitting useful sections of Blyberg's post; read it and others in his blog to understand "social OPAC" as a concept and plausible reality.)

It may be premature for *most* libraries to add social features to their online catalogs—but such features can be added in ways that don't interfere with authoritative cataloging, and there's a good chance that reasonably low-cost implementations *will* yield real benefits, at least for some libraries in some communities. If some libraries find it feasible—the worst that happens is failed experiments or underused "social" add-ons. The best is that other libraries will have proven models to follow.

Options for adoption

Traditional media this time: Joseph Janes' April 2006 "Internet librarian" column in *American Libraries*. So *that's* the animated conversation Joe was involved in at

the MSN Search Champs reception—how shocking it is that archivists throw things away, and how different OPACs would be if we were converting card catalogs today instead of 30-40 years ago. (I could barely hear myself think in that "funeral-parlor-turned-lounge-bar," but Janes' hearing is clearly better than mine.)

Janes uses the incident as a springboard to discuss appropriate times to jump into new technologies. It's a thoughtful consideration. "When is the right time to adopt or embrace a new technology or format? How long do we wait, and what's the right balance of benefit and opportunity cost in making that decision?" For some forms—such as blogs, wikis, and podcasts—there are two sets of issues: When should libraries begin *using* them, and how do libraries *add value*? (Should libraries be preserving, hosting, organizing, or fighting for intellectual freedom for wikis and podcasts? Why not?)

Janes also notes the other side: "With limited resources we can't do everything. Deciding when to jump in is one thing; deciding when to jump out is another. Once we commit to a form, we're loathe to abandon it. I often say about the only format we managed to avoid was 8-track tape." I'd be surprised if there aren't 8-track collections in libraries somewhere—after all, it was a genuine mass medium for a while. Libraries mostly managed to avoid early market failures such as Cartrivision, SelectaVision, V-Cord, TelDec, Holotape—but aren't there thousands of Rocket Ebook and REB readers littering public libraries today, or have they all given up the ghost?

As I covered the introduction of DVD years ago, I struggled with whether and when to suggest that libraries should pay attention—not that the readership of *Library Hi Tech News* would necessarily have cared what I said. I'm considering the same issue today with high-def discs. The stakes are lower for web software—but there are always costs, at least in time. It's all a matter of balance, and that balance involves many stakeholders—including, perhaps more directly than before, the community surrounding each library.

The more things change… and A need to read

An April 2, 2006 post by Steven Cohen at *Library stuff* and an April 17, 2006 article by Eileen FitzGerald in the Danbury *News-Times*. Cohen quotes Kay Runge, director of the Des Moines Public Library, on the eve of its reopening:

> The public library adapts to the community's search for information and its need for recreational reading and development of activities. It is NEVER a static place. The collection, whose mainstay remains the book, spans the generations of learning and discovery. A work's view of the times in which it was created provides the transition of our culture and history.

To which Cohen adds: "This reminds me of the premise that there is room for change as well as having many aspects of the library remaining the same. Books and quality reference service will always be a mainstay, while new technologies will allow us to connect with our users in more unique and fun ways. There's always room for both: The ways we have **always** done it and the new ways which **will** do it. Boy, that hits home for me."

Balance: Understanding that "That's how we've always done it" isn't a final answer—but it's also not an empty statement. The response should not be the dismissive, confrontational "I never want to hear that statement again." It should be "Can we consider *why* we've always done it that way, and whether this new possibility will serve us and our patrons better?" Any good library person has dealt with change throughout their career and should be ready for more change—but not for change's sake.

Speaking of change, isn't it a shame that teens don't read books any more and have abandoned libraries? Or have they? Not so much, according to FitzGerald's story, at least not in Danbury. There, book circulation to teens increased 70% from June 2003 to June 2004—and "nearly every month for the past three years, the library has increased its circulation of books for teens." The increase is faster than the Danbury-area population increase. It may have something to do with teen-oriented book displays, a teen space in the library (including places to sit and read), special discussion groups, what have you. The article offers other examples of libraries hiring teen service librarians and creating teen and YA spaces—and finding that teens respond. And they read. New services—new attitudes toward space usage, in this case—bring those "non-readers" in, but not just to make them "library users." These teens are reading books, which may explain the growth in YA publishing.

Three on balancing life

T. Scott at *TScott* on April 22, 2006; Lorcan Dempsey at *Lorcan Dempsey's weblog* on May 12, 2006—and Katie at *Young librarian* on May 11, 2006. All three offer reminders that we need to find our own ways toward balance and integration.

Scott thinks in terms of integration rather than "work-life balance": "What we really need is a fully

integrated life." Yes, there's always more work to do; yes, you can burn yourself out—but different people avoid that in different ways. Some people need to get away completely (I think I'm in that category)—but, again, we're not all alike. "That's never been my style. The library is never far from my thoughts, and I like it that way." Scott finds other ways to integrate—to find his own balance.

Dempsey checked back in "after long silence"—a trip each week for nine weeks or so, "a schedule I don't plan to sustain." He finds himself reflecting about trips and talks, their ups and downs. He's one of those who has trouble with lots of speaking because "I don't like doing the same talk twice; my limited sources of adrenaline get used up on the first iteration." (I find it nearly impossible to do the same talk more than once, and envy those who can do vital, involved speeches when they're saying the same thing over and over.) He has another disadvantage: "I find it hard not to think of myself as the audience and pitch the presentation accordingly."

This leads up to the final paragraph: "As a preservative measure…I am declining most new speaking requests for the rest of the year. Unless, of course, we are already in discussion about something. I need to spend more time at work and more time at home!" Need I explicitly relate this to the need for balance?

Kate's a little younger than these two but wanted to note why "I haven't had much to say lately" in her blog (or, rather, in *this particular* blog). She got a real job; she didn't feel as if she could add to the dialogue she was reading; and she's involved in other professional activities. This one's a special case because of the post title, "The importance and unimportance of blogging." **Importance**: The blog has given her name recognition and led to opportunities "that may not have come as quickly otherwise." The blog helped refine her writing style. **Unimportance**: "I'm not a one-hit wonder. This isn't all that I do, thankfully… My time is very precious. It will be for the foreseeable future. [After noting ALA commitments, a book chapter, and a "secondary career as a fiction writer"] This blog isn't going to die. It has a place in the LIS world. But I take to heart what Walt Crawford said: 'First, have something to say.'"

Five brief notes relating to balance in libraries and elsewhere

Steve B contributed "Differentiate or die?" on April 28 at *Blog about libraries*. After attending a session with a message about libraries failing to differentiate themselves from "the competition," he questions the viewpoint that "libraries are actually *competing* with businesses." He notes that businesses—including Google—must move product or go out of business. Even if libraries fail within "the marketplace," it will take a lot longer for their funding to actually disappear. Of course libraries should do "our level best to get the best return on taxpayer dollars"—but that's not competition. "We do have a responsibility to get the best possible return on the taxpayers' investment, but not at the expense of other organizations and/or businesses." He thinks libraries have the potential to "own a particular set of niches within their community," and those niches depend on the community—the tax base, the talents, the needs of the community, and where the library fits in to fill those needs. None of this means "competing" with booksellers or Google; it means finding the unique values of libraries.

Rachel Gordon, *The liminal librarian*, posted "READ" on May 17, 2006. Gordon, who calls herself a "Library 2.0 believer," sees people talking about surveys that reaffirm that most people think of libraries as book places "and wondering what we can do to change those perceptions."

> To them I say: "Good luck." Maybe we're all going to turn into "Idea Stores" [as some UK libraries are refashioning themselves], but I'm noting that even their reports say they've "doubled spending on books in recent years." Do we really want to mess with a brand this powerful? Or can we work on being books AND… like what our friends at B&N et al have done with books AND coffee?

Some "book"stores could use library attributes, according to Woody Evans' May 8, 2006 post at *IShush*. He talks about taking his wife to a comics shop for "free comics day" and his wife's reaction when they left: "I'm never going in there again." Why do girls and women feel comfortable checking out manga and other comics from libraries—but uncomfortable in comics shops? Briefly, "libraries aren't dingy, musty, dusty, and dark," they don't encourage grown men to hang around cussing, they offer "lots of kinds of stories in lots of formats," and "libraries aren't creepy." Hmm. Maybe there's a new slogan—or maybe not.

One aspect of balance is recognizing the needs of *all* library patrons, including those who actually use the library as well as those you're trying to lure into the fold. Paul R. Pival, *The distant librarian*, talks about this in a May 12, 2006 post. He was talking to his library's manager of integrated systems about social

networks and the like. The manager noted that suggestions for new items based on aggregate circulation data might not work very well because "items simply don't circulate that much!"—which is true of any good-size academic library, no matter how successful. But that's not the key here:

> The big fish-slap to the face though was when he reminded me that regardless of what the "kids" want, we still serve a very diverse population, and the average age of the professoriate is slightly higher than the 13-25 age range I was discussing. If we went all 3.0 and offered all sorts of cool services, including recommendation services, we'd probably have to have an opt in/out opportunity, which while doable, would make the whole endeavor a little more difficult.

Pival's conclusion: "I feel like Icarus—it's neat to fly, but I don't want to get *too* high!" Again it's about balance—finding ways to involve the "kids" while maintaining service to the faculty and grad students, whose needs and desires *should* be different.

Finally, Michael Casey on May 21, 2006 at *LibraryCrunch*: "Constant change—evolutionary, not revolutionary." He's discussing one of those books "that makes me wonder why it even had to be written"—why people didn't already realize what was being said. The book is Pip Coburn's *The Change Function*, in which Coburn argues that technology ventures will succeed if the level of change placed on end users is incremental or evolutionary, not revolutionary. "Technologies that rely upon the 'build it and they will come' theory are bound to fail. Users…are resistant to major change, and people are only willing to change when 'the pain in moving to a new technology is lower than the pain of staying in the status quo.'" That's not always true, to be sure, and some necessary changes are more disruptive than others—but, as a rule of thumb, as Casey says, Coburn's argument also applies to library change:

> For change to be successful it must be continuous, regular, and almost imperceptible. Successful change is not the old school variety of change that comes every few years and is accompanies by massive upheavals, frightened staff, and upset customers. Successful change is constant change, and constant change cannot be discontinuous or fractured. Constant change is fluid; it's evolutionary, not revolutionary.

Remembering that Casey is distinctly a "proponent of library change" (and coiner of "Library 2.0"), I would add that balance means finding ways to change while maintaining the core that still serves the patrons and the library well—and that change should never be for change's sake. Those are my words, but I'd be surprised if Casey disagreed.

Balance and Change

A library that stands still is unbalanced and headed for trouble, as is a library obsessed with Hot New Things at the expense of familiar services. Every aware librarian sees change throughout their career; every good library changes over time, sometimes more obviously than others. Michael Casey's note about successful change works as an introduction to these comments about changes and making them work.

It's about customer service, folks

Steve Oberg at *Family man librarian*, posting on March 30, 2006. I'm not enthusiastic about "customer"—but Steve works at a special library (and previously at a library vendor), and he's working off a posting about Apple, so let that pass.

> It's all about customer service, folks! We can (and I think we should) investigate and implement relevant new technologies in libraries as much as possible. But if these new technologies or technology services don't really enhance customer service, then we are deluding ourselves… Library users aren't all dissatisfied and turned off about technological backwardness, poor OPACs, or whatever. Don't forget the users who use libraries for, um, books. Print books…
>
> Let's not forget that while the energy and excitement currently displayed in the biblioblogosphere…over new technologies is generally very positive, it needs to be critically assessed in light of *local* library user needs.

No comment required.

Web 2.0 is for web 2.0 users…for now

That's Steven M. Cohen, posting April 2, 2006 at *Library stuff*. He's quoting a post at *Monkey bites* about the "fundamental disconnect between people who use the web and people who use the web 2.0"—that is, the fact that most people really aren't hip to remixing and social software just yet. Cohen suggests focusing on three things when trying to reach users with new technology options:

> 1) There is a need for our users to use these tools. If a library starts a wiki for their patrons to play with and nobody adds to it...was it needed? (Substitute wiki for any Web 2.0 technology here).
>
> 2) We know what our outcomes will be (somewhat). What is the goal of this initiative? How will it be measured? Will it garner a larger user base or just a few people who we have "sucked in" already with our other services? Does ROI matter?

> 3) They already have Web 1.0 down and are comfortable with it. On the other hand, is it linear? Do our users need to get Web 1.0 before the get 2.0? I kinda think so, but maybe I'm wrong.
>
> I'm sure that there is more that I missed. My point is that new technologies are very cool, fun, and exciting. But, is there a need to do everything and do we have to make sure that we don't lose some users while we make sure others follow along? This is very hard to do. I guess what I'm saying is that we shouldn't "do" technology for technology's sake. Do it because it makes sense for your constituencies. All libraries and their communities are different.

Overcoming the "tech deficit" (and helping others to)

John Blyberg posted this on April 25, 2006 at *blyberg.net*. He's pondering the "plight of 'tech-depressed' libraries"—those lacking the staff or equipment to do what they'd like. Much of the good software (he says "almost all") is free, but: "Open source software…doesn't cost a penny in licensing fees, but it does require expertise, experience, and finesse to mold it into an implementation of your vision…"

Blyberg believes libraries *need* "someone who is passionate about technology and all the great things it can do" and offers guidance for those who are passionate but not high-powered techies. "If you're not technically a techie, you're bound to run into situations where you don't know where to begin and the idea of putting together a critical path completely overwhelms you."

One suggestion is "paying it forward"—using web sites where you can find expertise from other librarians, based on the assumption that you will offer to help someone else in return. There's a fledgling Pay "IT" Forward wiki at blog.acpl.lib.in.us/twiki/bin/view/Payitforward/WebHome, and a fair number of experts have signed on. (I find it a little troublesome that we're getting *so many* wikis devoted to various aspects of—let's call it Library Success—rather than seeing the kind of growth and branching within a single wiki that can lead to a truly major resource like—well, you know the name. It seems as though people would rather start their own wiki instead of adding to an existing one; that's great for blogs but seems counterproductive for wikis. But that's another topic.) Blyberg sees possibilities and problems with this idea.

He also suggests officially adopting "an open-source agenda," which means using *and producing* open source code, including appropriate licenses to keep it that way. He also recommends allocating staff time to contributing to broader open source projects.

Blyberg urges that all software be object oriented to make it as widely reusable as possible. He stresses the importance of documentation—and of documenting "both successes and failures diligently" and making those records available. We need to know who's succeeding (and how); we *also* need to know which bright ideas didn't pan out—something the library field's bad at revealing.

> The point is that if we maintain a good working record of how we've done what we've done, whether it be in a blog, wiki, or even word files, we can point to it later when someone comes to us and asks, "how did you do that?" From experience, I can say that no matter how much time you spend on a project, if you walk away from it for a few months, it becomes very hard to recall specific details. Write it down clearly and concisely.

There's another point. Some new ideas will be successes in some libraries, failures in other libraries. If those results are well documented, researchers (people looking to improve libraries, not necessarily scholars as such) may be able to determine what makes X succeed, an *enormously* useful outcome for other libraries. Say social OPACs yield demonstrable success at six libraries and that the "social" aspects are ghost towns at six others: If we know what happened and how, maybe we can figure out what makes such aspects succeed.

Blyberg wants to see a "tech track" at larger conferences—that is, sessions that assume considerable technical knowledge. He mentions ALA as one of those conferences. I'm not sure how well this would work, but it's worth discussion. Maybe true geek conferences *should* be separate; I'm not sure. He also recommends pooling resources—developing services through consortia and co-ops. He notes the desirability of long-term planning—and the advantage libraries have over commercial operations: Libraries *can* share their ideas and successes; they're not competing with one another.

Then there's "reallocating resources." I'll let Blyberg's comment stand on its own:

> The 21st century library faces an entirely new set of challenges that can only be addressed through the judicious use of technology. As such, the planners and budgeteers need to make some decisions as to where money is spent. Maybe less needs to be spent on material (gasp!) one year so that it can be spent on technology. Look at where your patrons are spending their time, get a sense of what they want and need. It may be that your community is happy with what you're doing, or it may be underwhelmed by what you're not. As always, identifying what they want should drive spending, it

shouldn't be the other way around, where patrons are forced to use what we've spent money on.

Selling tech up the ladder

Dorothea Salo contributed this on May 5, 2006 at *TechEssence.info*. She considers the issue of getting buy-in, which I think works for any change, not just a tech-related change. You should read the whole post. Among the things Salo has found work for her and others: Show how it saves staff time and effort; show that there's little or no new cost; show that it's easy; have patrons on hand who know they want the service; anticipate primary objections; pitch a pilot project. Note where it's been done successfully in other libraries—or sell it as making your library a pioneer. Be prepared to pitch an idea more than once—and, in some cases, you may just want to "do it silently."

What doesn't work? Jargon. Saying it makes *your* life easier. Claiming patrons are doing it—without being able to demonstrate a benefit to the library. And one I'm going to quote in full:

- "It's cool!" If this is your only selling point, go back to the drawing board.

What would you say? Re-engineering?

Eric Childress offered this summary of a presentation by Cyril Oberlander in a May 7, 2006 post at *It's all good*. Oberlander was discussing how libraries should "leverage technology to enhance operational efficiency and better meet the needs of users." Excerpts of suggested strategies, "in more [Eric's] words than Cyril's":

> 1. *Surface to succeed*: Users will naturally seek to save their own time…
>
> 2. *Harness non-library sources*: ILL traditionally networks the existing stock of library collections, but the Web makes extending the ILL network's resource base to include the stock in online bookstores, online music vendors, etc. very feasible and desirable.
>
> 3. *Streamline delivery*:… Often it's cheaper—and faster—to buy used rather than borrow…
>
> 4. *Sweat the small stuff later*: …Collection decisions can be made post-fulfillment for most lower-cost items...
>
> 5. *Bend to win*: …Libraries must meet the user where the user is by building library services that interface gracefully with users' preferred discover-to-delivery patterns.
>
> 6. *Collaborate, educate, and innovate*: …We must invest in continuous improvement of staff skills, expanding and updating our own and our colleagues' professional knowledge, and be willing to try the new and unfamiliar…. [E]ncourage experimentation by staff. And be willing to throw some money at trials of promising but unproven technology that your staff is championing.
>
> 7. *Intelligent business requires business intelligence*:…[G]ood numbers yield truth, and truth can drive constructive change.

I may grumble about taking care before abandoning an "old" service that people still use and need—but a combination of vision, good heuristics, and good data may show that some old services can be done even better with a little rethinking.

No more reference desk?

This one—by Aleah Marie on May 19, 2006 at her blog of the same name—is a little different. It offers a concise example of the need to think through aspects of a change, including the recognition that any solution will probably cause new problems.

Marie is talking about roving reference, which has also been called "in your face" reference: "A librarian walks the floor and asks patrons if they have questions. That's pretty much it." As she notes, it's not a new idea; she cites a 1992 article on the subject, and I'm guessing it goes back considerably further (I believe Anne Lipow was advocating this in the 1980s). It's frequently a good idea, one probably made better through judicious use of technology.

> As with anything, though, it can go to an extreme. The extreme for roving reference is the complete removal of the reference desk. We would all be out on the floor, equipped with our PDAs or Tablet PCs, roving for questions. I may eventually warm up to the thought of no desk, but I'm sure not there yet. Getting rid of the desk effectively eliminates a "point of use" that is very familiar not only to librarians but also to the public….
>
> I also wonder how these changes may impact our patron's privacy? Some articles I have read suggest that librarians peek over the shoulders of computer users and offer a comment such as "That's an interesting topic" in order to initiate a reference interview. To that I say, "Whoa, Nelly!" I can't imagine a patron being comfortable with librarians peeking over their shoulders while they're at the computer. I know I wouldn't be comfortable, as the librarian, doing the peeking.

There's more to the post, and it's worth reading (aleahmarie.blogspot.com).

Ten years out

Michael Stephens, *Tame the web*, May 25, 2006. He quotes Taylor's meditation on innovation:

> …We are too willing to tear down and start anew. We are enamored of the innovative pilot projects when we haven't let our previous efforts take hold… How can we consider the impact of our decisions on the seventh generation when we can't consider the impact of our decisions on the current generation ten years out?

Stephens suggests some questions for those dealing with change (excerpted and reformatted):

> How many projects are you juggling right now? How many are on target and are moving smoothly? Have you let go of failed plans or pilots, learned from them and communicated that learning to all involved? What is the method of evaluation for a new service? What is the needed ROI (Return on Investment) to make that project a success?
>
> Is the service flexible enough to change over time as technology, users (members?) and society change? What unintended consequences might appear? How sustainable is that new technology and does it allow us to move on to better systems without a lot of issues?
>
> Most important of all: in a climate of constant change, how do we keep that balance of community need with rapid decision-making and innovation?

I would add: And do you balance the desire for change with the need for continuity, to serve your current patrons and the long-term needs of society and your community?

Problems and Issues

The aims of new library initiatives may be decades old: Serve as wide a range of appropriate potential patrons as possible, as well as possible, within the library's overall mission. But the tools keep changing, and web services offer tools that may make new initiatives less painful and more powerful. That doesn't eliminate problems and issues.

tired

Deborah Kaplan posted this frustrated essay on March 24, 2006 at *Ramblings on librarianship, technology, and academia* (if not the longest liblog name, it's close). Portions of the essay:

> I'm getting a little bit tired of tools.
>
> That is to say, I'm getting a little bit tired of how much excitement in libraries over all the new tools and technologies which are available to us to very easily morph from *How can these new technologies fulfill needs and desires our library has*? to *How can we use these new technologies*? Not that there isn't a place for that second question, but I feel like I'm treading water in a tool-driven world. There are a lot of real needs that libraries aren't yet meeting, and the new tools and technologies really can potentially meet those needs, even in a flashy whiz bang awesome way. Simple little things such as LibraryElf meet the need of adding to the possible ways users can be notified of their records. Or the tag cloud that Penn's library is developing, which may well meet the need of helping users find information in the way that makes no sense to them. These are genuinely good ideas. And yet at the same time, I see so many people who just seem to be saying *OPML! Podcasting! Library 2.0! Millennials who play World of Warcraft all day!*
>
> I'm actually not criticizing anyone in particular. Most of the librarians I know and bloggers I read are exactly on track, I think, seeing the technology available as useful but driven by needs. But I want to step back away from the flash for just minute, and go back to basics..,
>
> …I think most people mean well about being user focused and needs focused, but it is difficult not to get distracted by all the new toys. *Wikis and blogs and semantic web, oh my! Perpetual beta!*
>
> So while in general I think we're on the right track, I'm just a little tired. I want to step back and think about needs, and that figure out ways to fill those needs, and then, *when those needs are filled*, start thinking about bells and whistles.
>
> …I do understand that one of the rallying cries of Library 2.0 is that users should be helping determine needs, not librarians. But completely leaving aside the places where this is less appropriate, I'd say that the talk is nice, but the walk doesn't always work out that way. Letting users help determine needs isn't always about new technology. Sometimes it is, as in Penn's tagging OPAC. But sometimes it's a suggestion box, a patron group meeting, a friendly face. And technology? Isn't all about empowering the users as decision makers. Semantic web and RDF might be about the users in the long run, but right now? They just *aren't going to serve the needs of most patrons*. That doesn't mean we shouldn't use them, but it does mean we shouldn't fall into the trap of thinking *Shiny! Must be useful!* For that matter, even things that look good might not be; we'll see how Penn's tags play out in the long run, and virtual reference and IM reference have worked for some user communities and not for others.

Kaplan isn't condemning any initiative. She's not the only one to note that "listening to the users" is sometimes more "talk" than "walk" (I've already seen the answer for cases when users *don't* ask for Shiny New Things: "Amaze the users!"). She's wondering how early experiments will work out; so are many of us.

Breaking the back button

Karen Coombs posted this at *Library web chic* on March 28, 2006, commenting on a discussion I started about some web services "breaking the back button"—disabling anticipated browser behavior. Coombs notes that quite a few web technologies "break the back button"—usually as "a result of these technologies being used to try to make the web experience more interactive." Yes, "the back button was designed around a web where people went from HTML page to HTML page," but it's also a fundamental navigation technique people expect to have work.

Coombs offers reasons to break the back button—to get real-time interactivity or to be more responsive—and says, "From what I've seen, this kind of problem gets solved as the technology matures." Not because we learn not to break the browser button, but "because user expectations change." I suppose that's true: Once enough of your browser pages behave badly, you'll stop expecting them to behave well. Coombs concludes:

> The bottom line is that we have to make intelligent choices about what technologies we implement. We've been doing this for years when we chose what minimum resolution, browser, platforms, etc we would design for. This is no different. But to make these decision means understanding our users, what their expectations are, what technologies they have access to, and what their desires are. In an ideal world the website works equally well for everyone, but the truth is that this isn't any ideal world. We can't choose the lowest common denominator without alienating users, so we need to choose a middle road which allows us to provide the best experience for the widest group of users.

I don't argue for choosing the lowest common denominator—but at what point can libraries conclude that "the widest group of users" doesn't care whether the back button works? Which users do you go out of your way to avoid alienating? I don't have answers, but I believe those are important questions. I thanked Coombs for filling me in on the *why*—but that may or may not justify the *what*, depending on the situation.

For some things you need to go beyond simple

One clarion call among some librarians seems to be that search must "work like Google." This March 20, 2006 post by Steven Bell at *ACRLog* argues that simpler isn't always better—and includes an assertion from Don Norman that Google's home page is poorly designed because it's *too* simple. Norman points out that Yahoo!'s home page is more complex, but places Yahoo's resources up front, making them easier to use—and Yahoo! gets a lot more visitors than Google does. Bell continues:

> I think a similar case can be made for academic libraries, both their own web sites and the commercial databases to which they provide access. These sites are about much more than search, and they therefore are designed with more complexity in mind than Google's simplistic yet inadequate home page.
>
> For example, the OPAC lets users find out if they owe fines, allows them to put books on hold, may provide access to course reserves, and more. I tend to agree with Norman that users are better supported by a more complex interface that puts the resources they need to know about upfront where they can find them. Opting for a totally simplified interface that is focused solely on search simply forces the designer to bury other options and resources in awkward menus or lower-level pages. Let's not succumb to constant pressures to imitate Google. Academic libraries are about much more than search. Let's acknowledge some of our complexity, and find ways to present it that allow our users to navigate it successfully.

I'll go one step further, as does Lorcan Dempsey in a quick comment and link to his own blog: A simple search box may be great, but for online catalogs and research databases there *must* be more options available—and no more than a click or two away. Dumbing down the database to protect simplicity unbalances the system as badly as beginning by offering every single search option in a confusing, unusable search entry form. (Deborah Kaplan notes that some non-librarians are well aware that Google *isn't* just one search box: It's a whole range of search choices, arranged so that one of them is an obvious default.)

Techie librarians: a few selections

Disparate items about "losing your techie librarians" appeared on quite a few liblogs during March 2006; pieces of it continued later. I picked up some posts that seem related to balance—both between technology and other aspects of a librarian, and between the old and the new.

Sherri Vokey at *::schwagbag::* posted *Ten ways to lose your techie librarians* on March 20, 2006 (the title relates to a post on a different blog; Vokey doesn't offer a list). Some of Vokey's thoughts:

> There is something that is both interesting and very bothersome to me: the tendency to think that 'technology' is a recent, newfangled addition to libraries and the work that we do. It's not. Technology in the broadest sense comprises the tools we employ to provide services to our users, whether that involves creating mash-ups for a digital library or an incredibly sophisticated card catalogue system, many years ago. I just don't get it when people value one over the other…
>
> Sure, the technological landscape has changed a lot, and yes it requires new skill sets…and yes we need systems librarians to do their thing and keep libraries on top of cutting edge technological and digital advances. But just as we should all share in the recognition that 'technology' has played throughout the history of this profession, we should all also share in the ongoing responsibility for keeping current in the profession and maintaining currency in the tools of the trade: i.e. basic technological competencies.
>
> So I guess what I'm saying in a very roundabout way is that one sure way of losing your techie librarians, the

> ones whose responsibilities extend beyond basic tech competencies, is to dump everything and anything having any kind if technical implication on them, because this a happy techie librarian does not make.

My first non-hourly job involved designing and implementing a circulation system; I'm in my 38th year as a library techie. Even within library automation (certainly not the original library technology), I'm a *second*-generation techie.

Jessamyn West offered a few thoughts titled "…and about those techie librarians" on March 22, 2006 at *librarian.net*. One key paragraph for those thinking about balance:

> There is a blind spot in working with technology where people making the decisions have a tendency to assume that other technology users are like them. The ideas of usability, web standards, and accessibility as abstract concepts don't matter as much as what's for sale, what your tech team can build, and what your library director's favorite color is. The patrons become a distant third consideration when techie and non-techie librarians battle for turf. Trying to bring up the patrons in a usability debate becomes a complicated mess because everyone knows one or two patrons that, as exceptions to the rules, complicate the approach and strategies employed by the bulk of the rest of the patrons. Especially in rural or poorer areas, users with very little access to technology understand it differently than people who have grown up with it, used it at work for decades, or who have a familiar working knowledge of it. Do you design a website for your digitally disadvantaged community (who pays your salary) or do you design the site that will help them understand it, and do you know the difference?

Rory Litwin offered a thousand-word essay "Questioning the techie mission" on March 27, 2006 at *Library juice*—a sharply skeptical piece that, so far, has garnered a baker's dozen of trackbacks and comments. I won't address Litwin's essay in detail. I disagree with much of it (certainly including his assertion that "most library bloggers…are advocates of technology in libraries, and often practically missionaries," which I think overstates the prevalence of extreme advocates, since in my experience there are only a few "missionary"-style advocates).

His note that library blogs frequently talk about "Why don't they 'get it'?" where "they" means older, less techie librarians, is at least partly on the money. Litwin asserts a set of presumptions: That techie librarians make up young librarianship; that techie librarians represent the mass of younger library users; that users "are generally underserved at present because of the slowness of libraries' adoptions of new technologies"; and that new "technologies and all of their effects are automatically good. Technology is a *cause* to fight for, us against them." I think those points overstate the presumptions of technology-oriented library bloggers—but, if viewed as skeptically as you should view extreme calls for technology, there are some good points.

The further Litwin carries this, the more unbalanced it becomes. He claims a common "library blogging culture" that "feels alienating to librarians who don't share [the technology] mission," that the "dominance" of tech promoters means tech promotion assumptions are unlikely to be questioned within blogs, that some librarians are blinded to complex social effects through "unquestioning enthusiasm for new technologies," that focusing on technology as an end in itself distracts techies away from libraries' educational mission and, not last but least, "Technology promotion is ultimately the promotion of products offered by major vendors, which leads to an increasing power shift in our institutions away from librarians and toward corporate players."

Sorry, Rory, but *that's just plain wrong*, and represents a misreading of what's going on with "Library 2.0." Apart from Talis' papers, the discussion centers almost entirely around open source software and web services—generally moving *away* from products offered by major vendors.

As one who questions excessive tech promotion, I don't find myself in some obscure battled corner of liblogging—and I find more and more technology-savvy library bloggers adopting and expressing balanced, nuanced views of the issues involved. Most reaction to the special LIBRARY 2.0 AND "LIBRARY 2.0" issue of *C&I* was positive. The issue's been downloaded more than 14,000 times directly and an unknown number of times from other sites. People *are* looking at more than one aspect of these issues.

Mark Lindner picked up Litwin's theme in a March 27, 2006 post at *…the thoughts are broken…*: "Rory on 'questioning the techie mission.'" Lindner agreed with much of what Litwin wrote, noting, "Technologies can be very beneficial. They can also be very dangerous. In fact, they are generally inherently dangerous in that they are rarely questioned." Lindner is concerned about "rampant technological determinism" and about the "massive corporations" behind it all. A number of comments followed, including one specifically comparing Litwin's writing to the thinking that forces techie librarians out of libraries. Lindner

didn't see it that way. In a later post, he expanded on that (he's one of those who left a library partly because of tech-related problems) and on some of Litwin's points. In that long second post ("How to lose your tech librarians and Rory Litwin: Some thoughts," March 28, 2006), Lindner suggests a middle ground.

> I see two ways to take Rory's comments in relation to the "lose your techie" lists depending on whether one is an unrepentant technophile or an unrepentant tech obstructionist. And both of those groups need to be publicly humiliated in my not-so-humble (in this case) opinion.
>
> Some (many?) of the folks who unquestioningly embrace most any technology will take severe umbrage at his words. Those are the ones who most need to take a step back and learn about unintended consequences and the moral implications of rampant unquestioned technology use.
>
> As for the obstructionists latching on to his words and saying, "See we told you. We can't / shouldn't / won't do that with technology...." Well, they need to wake up too. And they also need to re-read his words. He never said any such thing. He claimed that there is a rampant unquestioned push towards the implementation of technology in much of the biblioblogosphere and that that is not a good thing for various reasons. He did not accuse everyone of it. He did not say all technology is bad. What he did say is correct. When he did make a claim he was careful to nuance it and to point out which were empirically testable.
>
> I see absolutely nothing in his words that impact one way or the other the various "lose your techie" lists. As for having any sort of answer myself, well, I'm sorry but I don't. On that point, I would again say see Jessamyn on "...and about those techie librarians." And be sure to follow the links in her post.
>
> There is a very large middle ground here. I like to think that I, and many others, are in it. I do agree with Rory that it at least seems as if much of the biblioblogosphere is firmly on the pro-technology side. And some of them are very denigrating to any on the other side of the middle, and honestly to many in the middle. Personally, I find the pro side to be the most dangerous, by far. That is not to say that some of the people completely afeared of any technology newer than the horseless carriage aren't denigrating also. I could name one prime example and so-called leader.
>
> Again, I see no overlap between "the thinking those lists points out" and Rory's post. Absolutely none, except for the far "right" and the far "left" in this ideology of technology. And make no mistake, that it is. I hope to engage with people in the vast middle ground. In my mind, those are people like Rory Litwin, Walt Crawford, Meredith Farkas, Jenica Rogers, Angel, Jessamyn West and many, many others. I full well know that many people might would put some of them elsewhere than middle, but at the moment I'm the one writing about technology and it's my list.

While there's certainly a *prominent* portion of liblogging "firmly on the pro-technology side," I don't think it's that big a portion. I think most of us are in the "vast middle ground" and am honored to be placed there. Lindner adds: "Things will be better when we all can finally start discussing and not dissing each other, drawing lines, and so forth." Indeed.

That post didn't draw quite as many comments, but the first one was a doozy. I refer you to the post itself (bookmark.typepad.com/the_thoughts_are_broken/2006/03/how_to_lose_you.html) to read the whole thing, including this astonishing statement from a high-profile public librarian: "Few people outside of academia/libraries/publishing care about books. Sorry, it's true." Lindner responded the next day, refining some points and responding to comments. As to the blockbuster sentence above, "I cannot and will not accept that first claim… It is *completely* untenable!" Since Lindner didn't say that folks embraced *all* technology (as a commenter implied) he rejected that as a straw man—and notes how easy it is for anyone (including him, and certainly including me) to slip into universalist arguments. "But I have…learned to the very depths of my being that there are few…universal "truths," "facts," or whatever you want to label them." There's more—and taking the several posts together, it's quite a discussion.

Jessamyn West found fault with some of Rory Litwin's piece in "tech," a March 29, 2006 post at *librarian.net*, as do I (but probably different faults)—and also urged people to "read what he says and think about it. You don't have to agree to get good ideas from it." Part of finding a balance may be learning to mine the writing of people you *don't* agree with to find the gems that improve your own understanding. Steve Lawson asked "Is the medium the message for library blogs?" on March 31, 2006 at *See also*, taking off from Litwin's essay and wondering whether blogging itself will tend to attract mostly techies or "netizens." Lawson is another advocate for balance. He finds social software interesting, he'd like to see larger libraries have someone exploring such services—"But do I think that blogs and wikis and social software *in and of themselves* are the most important thing about libraries? No way." He also points out, importantly, that most libraries have more than one person on staff—which means that a library can be exploring (and per-

haps implementing) new tools without each and every librarian being obliged to jump into the "techie stuff."

Privacy: four posts and a scenario

First, there's Rochelle Mazar's "Radical trust," posted May 11, 2006 at *Random access Mazar*. I don't fully understand the notion of radical trust, but it seems to have something to do with trusting patrons to add to library catalogs and other resources.

> The other piece of radical trust is one that shoots straight to the heart of librarianship; we need to let users radically trust us. This is the more dangerous option. In order to serve students well, the best thing we can do is let the students tell us who they are. We need to remember them, tailor our resources to their needs and interests, build on what they've done before. This is what amazon.com does, this is what Google does. It profiles a user and delivers customized information back to them. *It profiles a user.* We hate this idea, I know we do. It's tinged with commerciality, it screams *violation of privacy*. I don't even know what I think of this one, frankly. We *do* need real portals. We *do* need to customize our resources; our information landscape is so turbulent and confusing, we *need* to offer some support. But do we want students to let us know these things about them? Do we want to keep records on them? We don't want them to trust us that much. We don't want the responsibility of that trust, because we can see how easy it would be for that trust to be betrayed. Should they trust us? Can we be trusted? Can we protect them once they do?

My immediate note on this was "Assume that your records are FBI records. Period." I've been there. No, students *should not* trust libraries to keep records on them. No, the library *can't* protect those records with any assurance. No, students generally won't make truly *informed* decisions to allow such violation of privacy. More on that later.

Rory Litwin discussed "The central problem of Library 2.0: Privacy" in a May 22, 2006 *Library juice* post. I don't agree that privacy *is* the central problem (quite a few web services don't require invading privacy). But there is merit in Litwin's claim that users of social software sites "often lack the maturity that's necessary to make wise decisions about personal information sharing." I'd put it another way, since I think "maturity" isn't the issue. I suspect most younger people and many middle-aged people lack a clear understanding of *why* some paranoia about personal information is reasonable.

Litwin's right on one thing, where I believe Mazar agrees: "If we value reader privacy to the extent that we always have, I think it's clear that our experiments with Library 2.0 services will have uncomfortable limitations. This is probably going to lead many librarians to say that privacy is not as important a consideration as it once was." Litwin goes on into second-hand gengen, the generalizations he expects to hear about Millennials. I think he's at least half right here…but I think it reaches more than the Millennials (whoever they are). Again, many "Library 2.0" services don't raise substantial privacy concerns (including, for example, IM reference and user-contributed content on library sites)—but some, including "based on what you've read, we think you'll like X" and other collaborative recommendation tools, *do*.

Paul Miller of *Panlibus* had a response to Litwin's post on May 23—and what a response it is! The post quotes "Privacy is a central, core value of libraries" and responds:

> Is it? Ensuring access to a wide range of material, yes. Protecting the individual's right to go where they wish without censorship or censure, yes. But 'Privacy' is a term that can quickly become overly loaded, and can equally quickly become a quite ridiculous justification for *not* doing anything interesting.

Wow! Calling privacy a "quite ridiculous justification" for not doing something. There's a kind of New Librarianship that moves strongly away from balance, and is just what we want to hear from a vendor whose systems should support privacy. The post goes on to talk about "opt-in" and "informed consent," but "informed" is a loaded term. There's more to the post, and I'd call its conclusion a snide attack on what I regard as a core value of librarianship: "We must not become trapped in endless agonising over whether or not our poor misguided users should be 'allowed' to 'give up their privacy.'"

Michael Casey commented (in part),

> If we, as librarians, begin to second guess our users and their privacy decisions then we are entering a slippery slope of parental-style oversight. At some point we must accept the fact that customers are responsible for their own decision making and that sometimes customers will make decisions that they will later regret.

To which I must say, "Yabbut"—particularly when librarians are *inviting* patrons to make decisions that librarians believe those patrons may later regret. I agree 100% that librarians have no business telling users not to be candid in MySpace profiles—but that's not at issue.

The next day, Iris at *Pegasus librarian* posted "Privacy please?" In theory, she's all for privacy—"But please don't lynch me when I confess that there are

some aspects of privacy that I just can't get worked up about." Good enough. That's true for me as well, and I think for almost everyone. Iris has "gotten used to the idea" that "whoever wants to can figure out exactly what I do online at all times." She doesn't see any potential evil in people knowing "what books I check out, or articles I read." She suggests having varying levels of privacy and using *opt-out* systems. And she admits that she may not be a good judge.

Instead of arguing separately with each item, let me suggest a real-world scenario. If you believe any of these points is paranoid, you haven't paid much attention to recent history, from the House UnAmerican Activities Committee to data mining.

Here's the scenario: You're a wholesome patriotic American with a tween daughter. Years ago, you checked out *Lolita* because you heard what great literature it was. (If you're like me, you didn't make it very far into the book; sorry, but I was creeped out.) More recently, you were at the library with your daughter, who had forgotten her library card and had some relevant books to check out—learning about herself, understanding her changing body, reading literature that interested her. So you check the books out on your card. Of course you didn't opt out from the library's wonderful "Books you'll like!" system—after all, isn't it great at Amazon?

Some level of government decides to do a new push on child molesters. Next thing you know, there's a knock on your door—or you're subpoenaed to appear before a grand jury, or you're named in a newspaper article on suspicious characters, or you're just brought up On Suspicion. Why? Well, when you compare your profile of reading habits with those of known or suspected pedophiles and apply some deep datamining and correlation techniques…

But that's guilt by association! Surely nothing like that would ever happen!

Seen *Good Night and Good Luck*? Read anything about HUAC, the Hollywood blacklist, the careers destroyed through guilt by association?

Think it couldn't happen again?

Without *at least* that level of scenario-painting, I believe it's unprofessional to allow a patron to opt in to any system that would retain any trackable record of their reading habits. I believe privacy *is* a core professional concern. If I read *The Thoughts of Chairman Mao*, that doesn't make me a Communist—and if I run for office, I don't want that and my other broad reading habits showing up in campaign literature.

Addressing the permanence issue

To close on a less dismal note (since I don't have any neat conclusions to draw about all this), consider this June 9, 2006 John Blyberg post at *blyberg.net*. He's been thinking bout all the stuff he has squirreled away at various Web 2.0 sites, and suggests that not all Web 2.0 services are necessarily "good" or reliable. As he notes, "some of these companies are not going to be around forever"—and when they disappear, all the data stored on their sites either disappears or gets sold to the highest bidder. (That's not just me being paranoid: Under "Longevity," Blyberg specifically notes that a company going belly-up will "either destroy [their data] or sell it to the highest bidder where who-knows-what will happen to it.")

This three-page post suggests several factors to consider when choosing a web service: Longevity, responsibility, exploitation, privacy, stability, searchability, portability, and legality. That list is almost useless, but Blyberg's one-paragraph glosses provide hugely valuable considerations. For example, librarians "care very deeply about information and its longevity," so it makes sense to seek stable companies for new services. Exploitation? That covers, among other things, what a web service provider may do with your data to make the service sustainable—e.g., Google's inspecting Gmail content to serve up targeted ads. Portability: Can you get your data out of one service to use it locally or to move to another service?

There's more; this is a thoughtful post from an advocate of library use of web services that can help you make intelligent decisions choosing such services.

Not a Conclusion

I'm heartened by what I see as a tendency toward balance: More parties thinking about not only the possibilities of new services, but also the problems and the need to relate those new services to the overall spectrum of a library's services. I see more recognition that every library is (and should be) different, that no community is homogeneous, and that libraries generally aren't failing.

Perspective
Scan This Book?

Change the question mark to an exclamation point and you have the title of Kevin Kelly's essay-cum-manifesto in the May 14, 2006 *New York Times*. Why

would I comment about a pile of technological determinism from the *Wired* editor who, if I'm not mistaken, was the big noise behind "the long boom," the assured prediction (around 1997) that the Dow was on its way to 30,000 or more and we were at the beginning of a global boom that would last for decades?

Because a respected paper gave Kelly a *lot* of space, because loads of people commented on it, and because a high-profile blogger who used to be a mediocre *TV Guide* essayist went even further.

Kelly's essay claims that the various book scanning projects are "assembling the universal library page by page," quite an ambitious claim for OCA, Google Library Project, and friends. He goes on to say that this "planetary source of all written material" will "transform the nature of what we now call the book and the libraries that hold them"—toward Kelly's "Eden of everything" and "away from the paradigm of the physical paper tome." He assures us that search technology will enable us "to grab and read any book ever written," surely not a likely outcome of any current projects—and that "with tomorrow's technology" his estimate of "the entire works of humankind" (he says 50 petabytes) will "fit onto your iPod."

A bit later, he seems to assert that nobody prints out web PDF documents; people "happily read" them on computers. He claims "still more people now spend hours watching movies on microscopic cellphone screens"—without any apparent evidence. Then he launches into his fevered dreams of books "reading" one another, a future where "no book will be an island." Somehow, indexing every word—or, as he puts it, as each word is "cross-linked, clustered, cited, extracted, indexed, analyzed, annotated, remixed, reassembled" they will be "woven deeper into the culture than ever before" as "every page reads all the other pages." Whew.

Tags will "serve better than out-of-date schemes like the Dewey Decimal System." Every book, "including fiction, will become a web of names and a community of ideas." Kelly throws in more figures: there are 100 billion web pages with 10 links each, making a trillion "electrified connections"—and, for those who find those numbers suspiciously neat, raising a question as to whether Kelly just makes this stuff up.

What happens when all books become "a single liquid fabric of interconnected words and ideas"? He says this will "deepen our grasp of history" and cultivate a "new sense of authority"—or, just maybe, it could leave us drowning in interlinked trivia.

There's more—a *lot* more. Kelly loves universalisms. It's "**obvious to all** that copyright now existed primarily to protect a threatened business model." "**No one** doubts electronic books will make money eventually." [Emphases added] He also loves oppositions, contrasting "people of the book" with "people of the screen." He assures us that digital technology "*has now disrupted* all business models based on mass-produced copies." He suggests authors should make their livings through performances and sponsorship, giving up any chance of royalties as such. We're told "copies don't count any more." Not that books matter much anyway: "The only way for books to retain their waning authority in our culture is to wire their texts into the universal library."

Sample Reactions

Michael McGrorty at *Library dust* offered thoughts about the "inevitable transition" to electronic formats and noted (correctly, I think, although I disagree with aspects of the essay) that libraries are about stories—or, as McGrorty puts it, literature. Barbara Fister at *ACRLog* discussed Kelly's "utopian dreams" and noted that the assumptions that books are separate and unsearchable are both wrong: "Libraries don't lock books up, they put them together so they can be discovered." Angel, *The gypsy librarian*, took issue with Kelly's assertion that this utopia would make every book available to "every person," noting that even if it was feasible, that doesn't give the third world and the poor elsewhere either the readers or reliable electricity to make it universal. Nicholas Carr also notes that Kelly distorts the reality of current books—and, as I kept seeing, that his case is "completely unsubstantiated. There's no argument, only picture-painting… Like the true believer he is, Kelly demands that we take his prophecy on faith."

Some library bloggers immediately took other bloggers to task for criticizing Kelly, calling them knee-jerk reactions and suggesting librarians were trying to maintain control of "our books"—neither of which I saw in any liblogs. Indeed, some libloggers (e.g., Peter Bromberg at *Library garden)* seemed positively enthusiastic about the Kelly piece.

T. Scott, who likes the idea of dynamic text linking, points out that, "as is typical of net evangelists," Kelly "undervalues the physical printed book" and creates a "clash" that need not (in fact, does not) exist. "He quickly glides over the fact that books have never, in fact, been as isolated and lonely as he would pro-

ject." Scott also points out that Kelly misses the *virtues* of a book's physicality—and raises an interesting question: "If the only thing that we valued about books was the content, why would there be so much variation in type design and paper and size and shape and color and artwork?" Scott's not some aged librarian intent on preserving a building full of books: He's in biomedical research where, as he says, "there will be very little, if any, need for print in just a few years." For that area, that may be sensible—"I see no cause for regret in that whatsoever"—but elsewhere, "Printed books & magazines will continue to have value…because of those very physical qualities."

The distant librarian wondered about the figures—for example, the assertion that there have been more books than songs (which I also find improbable), and wondered how you'd go about doing effective searching in a universal library full of snippets and remixes. The writer makes a key point: "All this search stuff is great if you're searching for some information. But what if you *just want to read a story?*" (Although this is cited as a difference between fiction and nonfiction, I'd go further: It's a difference between information and *stories*, many of which are nonfiction.)

John Updike and Jeff Jarvis

Bob Thompson reported on various hoohah at BookExpo America in the Washington *Post*, asserting a clash between the "technorati and the literati" (ignoring all us geeky book-lovers). Thompson nails Kelly's essay as "the messianic/hyperbolic style favored by *Wired*" and goes on to John Updike's vivid reaction, including his suggestion that for authors to make livings by selling performances was "a pretty grisly scenario" and his note that "books traditionally have edges" and "are intrinsic to our human identity." One Google person's reaction was part right, part odd: While saying (correctly, I believe) that Updike's criticism of Kelly had an "apples and oranges" aspect, this person also asserted that books meant to be read sequentially are "a minority" of books. Can that be true—that reference works and other nonlinear books are the *majority* of published books? I find the claim unlikely, almost impossible.

Then, Jeff Jarvis, who I remember as a second-rate *TV Guide* "critic," posted "The book is dead. Long live the book." at *BuzzMachine*. He starts out with what appears to be a flat-out lie:

> I have nothing against books.
>
> But the book is an outmoded means of communicating information… We give undue reverence to the form for the form's sake…
>
> The problems with books are many. They are frozen in time without the means of being updated and corrected. They have no link to related knowledge, debates, and sources… They tend to be too damned long because they have to be long enough to be books… They limit how knowledge can be found because they have to sit on a shelf under one address; there's only way way [sic] to get to it… They depend on blockbuster economics. They can't afford to serve the real mass of niches… They aren't searchable… They have no metadata… Print is where words go to die.

The statements in the second and third paragraphs (excerpted) appear to contradict the first one-sentence paragraph. Now, boys and girls, how many false statements can you find in that third paragraph—particularly with Publish-on-Demand and more than 170,000 different titles published last year in the U.S. alone? (Any *librarian* who agrees that books "have no metadata" really ought to find another profession.) It was hard to read these paragraphs under the mass of red after I marked them up. Later, Jarvis says (correctly) that a lot of books "are utter crap," and I couldn't help but note, "as are a lot of blog posts."

Jarvis tells us "we need to get over the book." Naturally, he praises Kelly's essay. He also wants us to "get over" (a phrase I loathe as a sneering dismissal of valid perspectives) the idea of "one-way culture," that is, appreciating what someone else creates.

When I printed out the two-page post, it was accompanied by 49 comments taking another 10 pages, some of them insightful. Some were a little sad: One person "completely agree[d] with Jeff", saying, "I find the long-form utterly useless and the lack of interactivity [in a book] infuriating." Fortunately, there are always games. One determinist assured us that "Books are indeed outmoded and on the way out. Technology will triumph over whimsy." This person took pains to tell us that, while they used to read books voraciously, "non-fiction ONLY," they haven't read a full book in years. The next commenter called the essay "silly" and "profoundly anti-intellectual," noting that great books "enter a conversation which continues and echoes back and forth." Yet another split readers into "the fiction crowd" and "the non-fiction crowd"—apparently believing that nonfiction never has narrative force. As for interactivity, threads, etc., several people offered comments perhaps epitomized by Steve Baker: "I read books when I want to be im-

mersed. I don't want a conversation, I don't want to be interrupted, I don't want to click onto a detour. I just want to be in the thrall of someone's story or line of thinking." But the next person assured us that "the cult of the book doesn't have enough devotees to keep the publishing industry afloat." That's probably true (there are relatively few book cultists), but book *readers* manage to pay for an industry estimated at $32 billion U.S., $80 billion worldwide. I love comment #44: "I've tried this post and all the comments, but my eyes are starting to hurt. Is your blog available in paperback yet please?" And at least one librarian was represented—Bob Holley, who noted the *importance* of permanent media as establishing content at a specific time with a reasonable degree of certainty.

More Responses and Conclusion

Jonathan Weber in the *Times Online* responded to Jarvis, saying "I think he totally misses the point." He notes that books are about a lot more than "communicating information." He finds it hard to separate words from context—and he responds to Jarvis' objection to "lecture media": "Lectures have their place. I'm not looking to have a conversation with Dostoevsky, or Don DeLillo, or even a great non-fiction writer like Robert Caro. I'm looking to be carried off by their words, enchanted by their artistry, and the fewer digital distractions and yammering commenters, the better." Weber says "the great narrative will always have its place, or at least I hope it will." Chris Armstrong, the *info NeoGnostic*, objects to the "or" thinking in Jarvis' essay (which I also found prevalent in Kelly's manifesto)—that is, "remix" text isn't a replacement for narrative, but may serve other purposes. (Armstrong also points out that it isn't print books *or* ebooks, and that's true even when ebooks start to have market impact—but I don't believe the Kelly and Jarvis essays have much to do with ebooks.)

Finally, go back a month to Mark Lindner's quick comment (at *…the thoughts are broken…*) on a portion of an article I chose not to comment on, Thomas Frey's "The future of libraries: Beginning the great transformation." One of ten so-called "trends" is that we are transitioning from a product-based economy to an "experience-based economy," and this means "books themselves will transition from a product to an experience. As books change in form from simple 'words on a page' to various digital manifestations of the information, future books will be reviewed and evaluated by the experience they create."

Lindner notes that the trend itself is "pure and utter (marketing) nonsense," but goes a little further on the books portion: "That is one of the (intellectually) saddest and just plain stupidest sentences that I have read in over 40 years of reading!" As Lindner says, books will remain a product (even if the product is access to etext)—and there's an assumption that "if something doesn't have flashing lights, (computer) interactivity, and require electricity then it cannot be an 'experience.' Nonsense." Lindner says "every book that I have ever read has been an *experience*." (Lindner goes into a small rant on futurists and marketers which warms my heart, and you'll find it in his archives on April 21, 2006. But as he notes, "at least the 'good' ones made what they predicted sound good. This is just stupid.") If you're wondering why I didn't comment on Frey's piece—well, I couldn't do so as calmly and objectively as Lindner, particularly after adding a forest of red marks to the paper.

What's the trend? Technological determinists write silly projections. "Conversational media" triumphalists say stupid things about books and stories. Pointless and irrelevant oppositions are created when there should be room for multiple perspectives. Technology is credited not only with inevitability but with utopian powers. And life goes on. As do books (and print magazines, and electronic media, and conversational media, and searching, and…)

The Library Stuff

ALA, *The state of America's libraries*, April 3, 2006

"Libraries just aren't what they used to be. They're more—and better." That's the upbeat start of a 13-page "Executive Summary." Some bullet point headings on the first page: Libraries and librarians are good citizens; Americans appreciate libraries and librarians; Libraries are keeping up with the times—and with the public's needs.

The most interesting part of the report may be "Strong support for public libraries," the results of a survey conducted in 2005 for ALA and The Campaign for America's Libraries. Fully 89% of Americans reported being satisfied with their public libraries, with 70% extremely or very satisfied; that's a 10% increase since 2002. Echoing other surveys, this one found that roughly two-thirds of Americans own library

cards and visit the library at least once a year. Use of key library services has *increased* since 2002: 81% of library visitors take out books (up 14%), 54% consult the librarian (up 7%), 38% take out CDs, videos, or computer software (up 13%) and 22% attend special programs (up 8%).

What's more, 85% of those surveyed agree that their library deserves more funding (unfortunately, surveys aren't ballot boxes, as we just found in California, where low primary turnout played into the anti-tax contingent's hands). One result is a little odd: 60% say $25 or more per capita should be spent on libraries (up 9% since 2002)—but the average per capita expenditure in 2003 was $29.60.

The rest of the report covers various library areas. I didn't realize that 94% of public libraries serving more than 5,000 people provide literacy services; that's good to know. Otherwise, most of this is stuff any *American Libraries* or *Library Journal* reader will already know—but the audience for this report reaches beyond librarians.

Block, Marylaine, "Say it with pictures," *Ex libris* 276 (March 24, 2006)

Block worries about the "musty, forbidding image of libraries" persisting in America—although one might argue that "skyrocketing usage numbers for America's libraries" undermine the reality of that image. Block believes "images dominate our thinking," and may "trump reality."

The answer? Pictures. She wants to see lots of pictures of libraries in action—images of libraries as they are used. She offers lots of examples and suggests adding images to library websites and displaying them on Flickr.

She has a more ambitious idea: *A Day in the Life of America's Libraries*. She proposes it as "a project for ALA or PLA to undertake, with ALA publishing the book." She urges readers to talk it up and contact their councilors.

I wonder. Picture books are expensive to publish using traditional means. They're still more expensive on a per-copy basis using publish-on-demand, but the up-front capital costs are smaller. I think the idea is intriguing, but would be major (in time *and* money) to carry out, and wonder whether there would be an assured audience large enough to justify the cost.

I also suspect the proposed title won't work—that "A day in the life of" is pretty well tied up as the start of a title for picture books. (ALA Editions almost certainly couldn't publish *Libraries for Dummies* either, for similar reasons.) Still, it's an interesting idea. Maybe I'm wrong here…

A white paper on the future of cataloging at Indiana University, January 15, 2006.

Among the current stream of "cataloging papers," this 31-page document strikes me as unusually well balanced and thoughtful. Prepared by a twelve-person Task Group on the Future of Cataloging, it identifies a wide range of trends, offers recommendations for strategic directions, and concludes:

> The need for cataloging expertise within the I.U. Libraries will not be diminished in the coming years. Rather, catalogers of the future will work in the evolving environment of publishing, scholarly communication, and information technology in new expanded roles. Catalogers will need to be key players in addressing the many challenges facing the libraries and the overall management and organization of information at Indiana University.

A few notes from a white paper worth reading in its entirety. The group concludes that, in its current state of development, "Google Book Search is not likely to have much impact at all" on traditional cataloging: "Google is in the indexing business. It is not in the metadata business."

The group agrees with Thomas Mann: Full-text searching does not eliminate the power of subject cataloging. They doubt the utility of relevance ranking for bibliographic data—one of the few times I've seen a question raised about "relevance."

The group sees the need for libraries to serve senior faculty as well as incoming freshmen, and recognizes that scientists have different types of library needs than humanists. It sees that catalogers will need to work with different kinds of metadata.

Brief Items

Abram, Stephen, "Fad or trend," *Stephen's Lighthouse*, May 9, 2006

This one surprised me, given the source: "One of the key tricks in innovation is trying to figure out whether something you're looking at is a fad or a trend." Although it's an interesting discussion, Abram finally comes down where I would expect: Urging librarians to try out as many things as possible *even if they're fads*. "I think that we can learn from fads and it's not frivolous…It probably doesn't matter that we're exactly right all the time. Those folks who have a small closet or hard drive full of old early stage

software, old ebook readers, PDA's, phones, palm size PCs, games, have learned things earlier than others. They are better prepared to evaluate the next stage in the trend… By trying new things and checking them out, we learn how to ask better questions." Maybe—if, in fact, those who buy into every new fad *do* learn to distinguish between fads and trends, as opposed to trying to convince everyone else that it's all Hot, New, Happening, and Vital.

Dempsey, Lorcan, "Lifting out the catalog discovery experience," *Lorcan Dempsey's weblog*, May 14, 2006.

This post looks at the discovery aspect of online catalogs as part of a broader view, and suggests that this portion "will be increasingly disembedded, or lifted out, from the ILS system, and re-embedded in a variety of other contexts." He suggests some contexts (with examples as appropriate) and how those contexts might change discovery. I won't attempt to summarize; it's not *that* long an essay (essentially 2.5 pages) Well worth reading and thinking about: How do catalogs fit within a wider context?

Lawson, Steve, "A biblioblogger visits the local branch library," *See also…*, June 7, 2006.

I couldn't resist this, and can't really offer any advice other than: library.coloradocollege.edu/steve/archives/2006/06/a_biblioblogger.html. Go read it.

Lawson, Steve, "Towards better online conferences (part one)," *See also…*, May 10, 2006.

Lawson offers interesting thoughts about "real" conferences and online conferences, and the possible disadvantages of *free* online conferences (such as the HigherEd BlogCon). Lawson's raising issues—explicitly not saying "this must happen now!" or "online conferences are broken!"

He notes that many of us go to conferences more for the interstices than for the programs: "I'd say that the part of the conference that appears in the program is less than half the story… The attendees **are** the conference." Since I find that informal communications represent about 90% of ALA's value for me at this point, I can't disagree. How do you "hang out" at an online conference? "There is no hotel bar to hang out in, no mealtimes to bring people together in groups." He suggests a semi-official "backchannel" open to wildly off-topic remarks.

He agrees with Steven Bell: "When any program or event is free those who registered have less of a commitment to attend." There may be other ways to assure attention.

Speaking specifically to the priced ACRL online conferences, he wonders just what problem ACRL is trying to solve. He believes HigherEd BlogCon had a problem with "thousands of visitors but little interaction," and doesn't know whether charging would change that.

A thoughtful post, with quite a few good points packed into two print pages.

"New study shows reference alive and kicking," *Retrofitted librarian,* June 2, 2006.

The study's picked up from *Library Journal*—and basically says that the sad old "55% rule" (that reference librarians answer about 55% of questions correctly) is based on a limited view of reference work. This study, done in a dozen Southern California public libraries, used a "truly representative field sample" and yielded a *90%* success rate: "In 90 percent of the cases in this examination, a panel of reference experts determined that librarians recommended an accurate source or an accurate strategy in response to a user's query." The "half-right reference" observations always seemed improbably negative.

Tennant, Roy, "Snatching victory from the jaws of defeat," *TechEssence.Info*, May 15, 2006.

It's tough to comment on *any* of *TechEssence.Info*'s excellent essays without wanting to comment on them all. This one offers Tennant's "best advice" on pulling off victory in a project when the prospects look bleak.

Key points: Focus on what's important, make quick decisions, give it all you've got, plan what you can, arrange for backup on critical tasks, communicate well and often, and roll with the punches. Each of those introduces one or more paragraphs of Tennant's typically tight prose. Good stuff.

My Back Pages

One PERSPECTIVE in a previous issue began as a MY BACK PAGES item based on two essays in the March 2006 *Stereophile*. Three equipment reviews in that same issue deserve mention.

The first is of Outlaw Audio's RR2150 stereo receiver. There aren't many two-channel receivers being produced in these days of home theater, and audiophiles (and their magazines) tend to dismiss receivers

as inferior to separate preamps, amplifiers, and tuners (if anyone cares about radio). There's something else unusual about this item: $599 for a receiver claiming 100 continuous watts per channel into an 8-ohm load—and yielding 125 watts by *Stereophile*'s measurement standards. It turns out to be a very nice unit; at one point the reviewer used it between a $90,000 turntable and $45,000 speakers, and didn't find it disappointing in that ridiculous combination. So you can get serious high fidelity by *Stereophile*'s standards in a $599 receiver.

The next review uses fancier language, and should: It's for the Chord SPM 14000 Ultimate monoblock power amplifier—$75,000 for a stereo pair of amplifiers (not including preamp or tuner). The maker claims ten times as much power (1,000 watts into 8 ohms), and the reviewer calls that "*very* conservatively rated"—but the measurements show it delivering 525 watts, just over half as much as claimed. The Chord is five times as powerful as the Outlaw. It probably sounds better under some circumstances. Could it be *125 times* as good?

Later we get to silly season: the $2,250 Yamamoto A-08, which the reviewer *loves*—and which yields a whole *two watts* into 8 ohms, but only if you measure with 5% total harmonic distortion. At the usual limit (1%), figure *one-third* of a watt. Looking at the measurements, "expensive piece of crap" would appear to be a good summary. After showing measurements, the editor says "I don't think I need to say anything more about the Yamamoto A-08's measured performance. It does *look* very handsome and it is beautifully made." The reviewer calls it a "howling bargain." Pardon me while I howl a little. That's more than three times the price of the far more accurate, 50 to 350 times more powerful, much more complete Outlaw—but the Outlaw only *reproduces* music; it doesn't *make* sweet music (make music sweeter) by rounding off the edges of the source material.

Giving Web 2.0 the Business

Maybe O'Reilly coined the term "Web 2.0." Maybe not. In any case, the publisher held the first "Web 2.0 Conference" in 2003, producing it with CMP. So far so good. Lots of people have doubts about "Web 2.0" as a meaningful name for a bunch of concepts and tools.

Some folks wanted to hold a conference with "Web 2.0" as part of its name. That's when the web hit the fan: Turns out O'Reilly has a pending application for registration of "Web 2.0" as a service mark 'for arranging and conducting live events…" In other words, Web 2.0 is a *brand name* as far as O'Reilly is concerned, and it acts to protect that brand. You can only use the term as part of a conference name if you clear it with O'Reilly.

The discussion that followed has been remarkable—both for the many people repelled by a supposedly benign publisher's act to control the term and for the way O'Reilly and CMP handled it. It's fair to say that the incident has damaged O'Reilly's reputation as a special business and possibly weakened "Web 2.0" as a useful term.

The same thing shouldn't happen with "Library 2.0." Michael Casey isn't a business and has no intent of claiming that term as a service mark. He has explicitly dedicated the term to the public domain—which shouldn't be necessary, but should serve as prior use and a general counterclaim to any attempt by someone else to register the term. In other words, Michael Casey really is living up to the ideals and ideas that are part of the term. Too bad about O'Reilly.

Why were CD Sales Down in 2005?

You know RIAA's claim: peer-to-peer file-sharing. Here's another possibility, as stated by Don Van Cleave, president of the Coalition of Independent Music Stores (quoted in the April 2005 *Sound & Vision*): "An absolute, gigantic cesspool of really bad bands."

Honest Reporting

That same April 2005 *Sound & Vision*, two pages later, reporting on a really big plasma TV and noting that an 80" plasma TV "is never *just* an 80" plasma TV." Here's the next sentence, *exactly* as it appears in the magazine: "Taking plasma into the 80s is **Samsung's** (holy crap!) **$150,000 HP-R8082**, whose screen has 1,920 x 1,080 pixels."

Ethics are for Suckers

The article title is "Tricking out those parked domains," in the "What's cool" section of the May 2006 *Business 2.0*. It's a story about websites that are nothing but links to advertisers. They're con jobs: They serve no purpose other than to garner ad revenue when someone clicks on a link. Now, they're getting fancy: Services will add a few hundred words of "content" to try to improve the chances of landing on one of these sites, by foiling web search engine algorithms.

Many of the sites are domain names that might be plausible, or domains snatched because their original

owners didn't renew them promptly, or domains that spell words slightly differently.

The article isn't denouncing these sites. It's offering "A few cheap and easy secrets [that] can help you capture a bigger share of the Internet ad boom." Next to "What's cool" at the top of the page it says "Playing the angles." After all, you might make money.

Copy Editing Costs Money

Apparently, money that more and more magazines can't afford. One example: *The Perfect Vision*, May/June 2006, a set of reports on CES2006. Let's skip over the absurdly high-priced equipment that now seems to be all the rage ($15,000 digital "controllers"—like a preamp but with video; $20,000 controllers that *don't do video*; a $600,000 home loudspeaker system from a Carson City maker) and look at two pages. Page 38: A picture caption, "It's cool blue looks and hot performance should make the Harmon Kardon AVR640 a class leader in 2006." A quoted sentence (which, after all, the person quoted *said*, so it's not that person's fault): "It's a fairly safe guess that Rotel and other brands will be looking to use this technology in amplifiers because of it's compact size…" Elsewhere in the report, writers or editors do seem to understand that there's a word spelled "its" without an apostrophe…

Then there's page 46. A grumpy report on Klipsch's display of on-wall loudspeakers notes, "*They couldn't be heard*, unfortunately, because directly across the aisle was a demo site for an auto racing virtual-reality game, complete with deafeningly lifelike sound." [Emphasis added] Just down and to the left from that explanation is a picture of the speakers with this caption: "A number of the more than a dozen in-walls showcased in a 'noisy' South Hall by venerable speaker-maker Klipsch. The Klipsch speakers held their own." Well, maybe looking good counts as "holding your own."

The Return of the Mainframe?

Most of you may not remember when "interactive" computing meant terminals connected (hardwired or via modem) to mainframes in timesharing mode. A letter in the May 2006 *PC World* objected to "cheerleader-esque" editorializing about the wonders of Web apps as substitutes for desktop applications. To quote part of Nigel Mend's snappy little reminder:

> Dude! It's the mainframe computer all over again. The PC liberated us from the autocracy of mainframe administrators lo these many years past. Now folks have rediscovered the mainframe model—and its control.

Maybe, maybe not—but I'll admit to being struck with a touch of déjà vu when I'm told how wonderful it would be to have the applications running "somewhere else" (with that "somewhere" also providing backup) and just focus on the data. Been there, done that, and I'm not interested in going back.

The Best High Tech Cars

That's the cover story in the April 25, 2006 *PC Magazine*, touting the first annual "Digital Drive Awards." Inside, we have two pages devoted to drooling over a "high tech" car (a Chevy Tahoe?) and Bill Howard's car-oriented column. Note that the magazine is *touting* a 5,500-pound behemoth that gets 15 EPA MPG (not real MPG) in the city, 21 on the highway. What pleases *PC* so much? "It integrates more technology" than previous versions.

It gets worse. Pages 56 through 88—that's out of a 112-page issue—are *all about cars*. Lots'o'big pictures, "ten of the most technologically advanced cars on the market," very little text—and culminating in a "build it" feature showing how you can add a notebook, scanner, touch screen, and printer to your car—all of which appear nicely operable from the driver's seat. Worried about that idiot on the cell phone in the next—or, no, in your—lane? How about the jackass working on a PowerPoint presentation?

Masthead

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