Cites & Insights
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Cites on a Plane

I was having a little fun. I already knew which issues had slightly light readership ("slightly" is relative; by 2003 standards, all of these issues were widely read). So I just took one "timeless" essay from each of several of those issues, dumped the portions of the most recent narcissistic extravagance that weren't new [except that I missed one]—and added that 10% Auto-summary because I remember having fun with Word Autosummary in the past.

It certainly wasn't a "greatest hits" special. If I do anything like that, it will be thematic, involve updates, probably combine material from other published outlets, and probably appear in print-on-demand book form. This was just a goof. A 38-page goof (that I'm not saving in print form, by the way).

I figured a few dozen people would find the whole thing amusing, maybe a hundred at the outside. I probably spent an hour total (no copyfitting, no HTML, no table of contents, no index, no changes in the old-issue or old-contents pages, since the special thing *did* disappear on January 23).

If I had had any idea that **2,082 of you** were going to download it, I might have done something a little more substantial. Or maybe not. Hope it helped you catch a nap on the flight.

Language Grumps: The Vanishing Fewer

This might be a probably-rare recurring bit of blather or it might be a oneshot: A grump about the usage of American English that I'm seeing in print, on the web and in conversation.

I can guess why this one happened. "More" works for both numbers and amounts—you have both "more money" and "more dollars." So people

figure, well, less is the antonym for more. Except that it isn't. "Less dollars" is *wrong*, and I find it abrasive on the ear. "Less money" would be right, but that money amounts to *fewer* dollars.

Easy rule: If it's countable, use "fewer." If it's a mass noun—something not countable—use "less."

So: Less sand, fewer grains of sand. Less water, fewer gallons. Less traffic, fewer cars. Less enrollment, fewer students. Less time, fewer hours.

See? Isn't that easy? If you can count it, and you subtract one or more, use "fewer." If it's not countable—you can't count sand, only grains of sand—and you take away some (you can't take away "one sand"), use "less."

I don't believe this is raised-pinky affectation. I believe it's simply good everyday English.

Inside This Issue

And Speaking of Usage…

I believe I stated these four "house rules" for *Cites & Insights* years ago but I'll repeat them:

➢ I use "disc" for any optical medium (CD or DVD), "disk" for magnetic disks.

➢ I regard "data" as a mass noun (taking the singular) except when used in statistical/scientific form (one datum and another datum)—but I mostly avoid it.

➢ I *deliberately* use they, them, their in *both singular and plural cases* as a gender-neutral third-party pronoun, because English lacks a gender-neutral singular third party pronoun and I get tired of "his or her" and all that.

➢ I prefer not to use the penultimate comma in a series unless it's needed for clarity—but my

punctuation is so haphazard (a known weakness) that it may appear random.

Predictions and Scorecards

Most years, I feature some sets of predictions, including the occasional snarky comment and, when available, scorecards for the previous year's predictions. Of course, *good* pundits predict far enough into the future to assume that people will have forgotten the predictions by the time they fail to come true. As I've learned, a recognized hotshot futurist pundit will continue to be recognized as a hotshot futurist pundit, *no matter how awful the track record actually is*.

But that's a different rant, one I occasionally feel like making when names such as Negroponte, Tapscott or particularly George Gilder come up (usually in conjunction with surefire futures they're touting). Repeating the rant does me about as much good as Seth Finkelstein's pointed and useful commentaries have done him—so why bother?

Will that serve as a reason for the *lack* of scorecards and (with one exception) predictions last year? My reasoned judgment that it was a waste of time for me to publish and comment on predictions?

No, I didn't think so: After all, the Grand Poobahs of Punditry *don't* usually make one- and two-year predictions: People might not forget fast enough. What really happened last year was…I forgot. Or maybe I wasn't reading the same sources.

That introduction is one way of turning a set of scorecards and predictions into something like a perspective. Beginning with some *two-year* updates from "The hazy crystal ball," my last roundup of predictions, which appeared in *C&I* 5:2 (Midwinter 2005).

The Hazy Crystal Ball, Two Years Later

Notes on some of the forecast sets from that essay.

PC World: "What's new and what's next"
This December 2004 piece was a two-year forecast and it was unequivocal: These are things "the next two years *will* bring us":
➢ The "next PC" will have dual-core processors; two-thirds of all PCs in 2006 will have 64-bit processors; high-end PCs are likely to have 4GB or more of RAM; there may be Lego-like upgrades. True, possibly true, false, false. Two out of four ain't bad.
➢ Volume production of SEDs in 2007; big OLEDs and other foldable displays stay in the lab; maybe rear-projection TVs with three more primary colors. False (there certainly won't be volume production of SEDs this year), true, true for one or two brands.
➢ This one's still "three years out" from now—MIT Research Labs' claim that we all really want computation everywhere, the Oxygen Project. I still think it's absurd, particularly if we care about, oh, power and resource consumption, for example.
➢ Smarter photo software using metadata produced by digital cameras: True, I believe.
➢ Hi-def DVD recorders shipping: True (Blu-ray burners started shipping in late summer)—but then, it was true *in Japan* in 2004.
➢ Nastier worms spreading to cell phones, PDAs, etc.: I don't know that they're "nastier" but there are cell and PDA worms.
➢ Batteries made of paper and other fibers: Still in the "any day now" phase, not the manufacturing phase suggested for about now by SRI.
➢ Cell phones with hard disks, able to switch between cell and wifi networks—and usable during flights. Yes (I believe), yes—and so far, no, but that horrendous future seems imminent. One more reason to avoid air travel.
➢ The Smart Home will finally arrive—kitchen tables as virtual workspace, food containers that track freshness, etc. False, at least as a significant marketplace phenomenon.

All things considered, that's not a terrible track record.

Red Herring's top ten technology trends for 2005
These trends were predicted to "dominate the world of technology in 2005," so we're giving an extra year:
➢ The end of Moore's law: False.
➢ Medical devices *inside your body* to prevent depression, relieve back pain, "and even paint your esophagus to reduce acid reflux": False.
➢ Videos, photos, music on cell phones and fast deployment of 3G networks: True and maybe.
➢ Mini fuel cells in commercial applications, with laptops running for days and cell phones taking calls for weeks: False.
➢ Internet telephony with VoIP becoming a household word: True.

> - The digital living room "with consumer electronics vendors battling it out against PC/software companies." Mostly false; PCs rarely show up in living rooms.

I suggested the first was premature, the second unlikely on wide scale, the fourth highly improbable, and the last irrelevant except for "a few million early adopters." I'm satisfied with those comments.

Business 2.0

This late-2004 set of eight predictions carried its own disclaimer: "best enjoyed with a salt shaker handy." Again, predictions were for 2005, but let's allow the second year:

> - "The year of the DVR"—more than 10 million installed by year's end. Apparently true.
> - Apple's iPhone hits the market. False.
> - "Google searches everything, including video." Sort of.
> - Blogs and podcasting go mainstream; some make money. True.
> - Tech consolidation continues—as do startups. True.
> - Nanotech makes fuel cells feasible. Unclear.
> - Chinese IPOs "party like its 1999." Unclear.
> - "The word 'passion' is barred from all business meetings (please)." False.

Surprisingly good for a self-deprecating set, and this wasn't the only source of an iPhone prediction.

PC Magazine "crazy predictions"

I didn't quote all 19, and these predictions are stated as *possibilities*, some "decidedly fantastic." Here's how eight that I *did* quote panned out two years later:

> - eMachines drops the "Gateway" name. False—and Gateway's returning to its roots.
> - Bill Gates retires and devotes himself to philanthropy. Premature.
> - Apple "launches a PDA smartphone." False.
> - Windows XP SP3 and a leaner IE by August 2005. False; SP3 never arrived.
> - "Spam wins" but nobody responds, so spammers switch to phishing. Unclear.
> - A supervirus sweeps through "most home PCs without up-to-date virus signatures" yielding loads of "zombies bringing down sites like Amazon, eBay, Google and Microsoft." False, at least in general, fortunately.
> - All production of VCRs and full-size VHS tapes ceases. False (with VHS/DVD combos, it's likely to stay false for a couple years yet).

> - Intnernet2 moves to the commercial world. False.

Clearly a grain of salt wasn't enough.

Scorecards for 2006

Ed Felten at *Freedom to tinker* is scrupulous in reviewing his predictions. The predictions for 2005 were surprisingly accurate (I haven't summarized them), so "we decided to take more risks having more 2006 predictions, and making them more specific." Here's the post, including all the predictions within fields I try to follow closely. Predictions in italic, most commentary omitted, my own comments in **bold**:

(1) DRM technology will still fail to prevent widespread infringement. In a related development, pigs will still fail to fly.

We predict this every year, and it's always right….

(2) The RIAA will quietly reduce the number of lawsuits it files against end users.

Verdict: Right.

(3) Copyright owners, realizing that their legal victory over Grokster didn't solve the P2P problem, will switch back to technical attacks on P2P systems.

Verdict: mostly wrong.

(4) Watermarking-based DRM will make an abortive comeback, but will still be fundamentally infeasible.

The comeback was limited to the now-dead analog hole bill… Mostly wrong.

(6) The Google Book Search case will settle. Months later, everybody will wonder what all the fuss was about.

Verdict: mostly wrong.

(7) A major security and/or privacy vulnerability will be found in at least one more major DRM system.

Verdict: wrong.

(8) Copyright issues will still be stalemated in Congress.

Another easy one. Verdict: right.

(15) Push technology (remember PointCast and the Windows Active Desktop?) will return, this time with multimedia, and probably on portable devices. People won't like it any better than they did before.

[T]his didn't happen, at least not yet. Wrong.

(17) HD-DVD and Blu-ray, touted as the second coming of the DVD, will look increasingly like the second coming of the Laserdisc.

The jury is still out… [M]ostly right. **[Too early to claim right, I believe.]**

(18) "Digital home" products will founder because companies aren't willing to give customers what they really want, or don't know what customers really want.

Verdict: mostly right.

(19) A name-brand database vendor will go bust, unable to compete against open source.

Verdict: wrong.

(22) Social networking services will morph into something actually useful.

The meaning of "social networking" changed during 2006… [M]ostly right (I guess).

The predictions were wrong more often because they were more daring and specific.

Peter Suber's predictions and track record for 2006

Briefly paraphrasing from a five-page set of predictions in the January 2006 *SPARC Open Access Newsletter*, Suber offered thirteen predictions, each in considerable detail: My snap judgments follow.

➤ Continued growth in all aspects of OA. True.
➤ Major year for funding agency OA policies and mandates. True.
➤ "Green" publishers may look for ways to revoke consent to postprint archiving. Not that I've seen.
➤ Publishers will take "just about every conceivable position in the landscape" on OA. True. As Suber notes, publishing isn't monolithic.
➤ People will recognize that most OA journals don't charge author-side fees, thus reducing particular OA arguments. Suber later called this "the worst prediction I've ever made."
➤ Fast growth in "OA public-domain books." I'm not sure I understand this one, but it's hard to judge.
➤ Book scanning projects "will highlight OA business models that depend on advertising, institutional subsidies, and philanthropy." Unclear—and the book scanning projects generally haven't made as much noise in 2006 as hoped.
➤ Open file formats will become part of the OA conversation. Unclear.
➤ Far more serious scholarly use of blogs, wikis, RSS, P2P, folksonomies—all OA. True?
➤ The judgment that research on the web (including priced research) matches that of the best print libraries will become conventional. I believe Suber's drawing a false dichotomy between libraries and the web, particularly since most fee-based web resources in most universities are paid for (and thus part of) the libraries. "Print libraries" haven't been print-only for a very long time.

➤ Micropayments will trigger talk about affordable (rather than free) ejournals as an alternative to OA. I haven't seen this, but I also haven't seen micropayments having impact.
➤ More journals will add free services *around* articles, not including articles. Probably true.
➤ If there's another big terrorist attack, it will be used as another objection to OA. There wasn't, so it's moot.

Suber's summary of 2006 appears in the January 2, 2007 *SOAN*. It's **mandatory reading** for anyone who cares about OA—and way too long to include or even excerpt here. There are a couple of points I might argue with, and I may yet excerpt and discuss this in a future LIBRARY ACCESS TO SCHOLARSHIP piece, but my arguments would be minor

Predictions for 2007

Let's start with *Freedom to tinker*: A smaller set of predictions prepared by Ed Felten and colleagues Alex Halderman and Scott Karlin. I'm only including five (of 13) that I regard as within the foci of *C&I*; you may want to **read the post**, as other predictions seem reasonable and are certainly interesting.

(1) DRM technology will still fail to prevent widespread infringement. In a related development, pigs will still fail to fly.

(3) Despite the ascent of Howard Berman (D-Hollywood) to the chair of the House IP subcommittee, copyright issues will remain stalemated in Congress.

(5) Major record companies will sell a significant number of MP3s, promoting them as compatible with everything. Movie studios won't be ready to follow suit, persisting in their unsuccessful DRM strategy.

(8) AACS, the encryption system for next-gen DVDs, will melt down and become as ineffectual as the CSS system used on ordinary DVDs.

(12) Bogus airport security procedures will peak and start to decrease.

Information overlord

Scott Vine offered sixteen predictions for 2007. Some are outside *C&I* scope; here are a few I thought worth noting (and my comments in italics):

AllofMP3.com to get bought in a surprise (and risky?) move by Yahoo, who recognise its business model as winner. *Doubtful—the legal risk probably exceeds the potential reward.*

Google will buy Pandora. *Could happen, but I hope not.*

The US District Court will once again hold that COPA is unconstitutional in its attempts to protect children

online. *Let's hope this is true…and that the Supreme Court agrees.*

Microsoft will buy AOL. *Doubtful.*

IPTV will really take off.

Mobile spam and viruses will grow. *Likely.*

DRM in music will be abandoned (may be 2008 until this one really happens, but maybe). *Doubtful, although it's a wonderful notion.*

Wired news: "Wild predictions for a wired 2007"

I think these are intended to be grain-of-salt predictions. Here are a few, again with my thoughts in *italics*.

Spam Doubles: No-brainer—but no one cares because we're all using IM, especially at work. *"We're all" is just nonsense here.*

Year o' the Laptop: Half of all new computers sold in 2007 will be laptops and 20 percent of those will be Apple's MacBooks. *First part: Possible. Second part: Unlikely—that would more than double Apple's market share even if they didn't sell a single iMac or other desktop.*

Print to Web: A major newspaper gives up printing on paper to publish exclusively online. *Unlikely—the economics still don't work. Unless you define "major" very broadly.*

Apple goes Apple: The entire Beatles catalog is licensed exclusively to iTunes for a year. *Seems unlikely.*

HD-DVD wins: HD-DVD is the clear winner over Blu-ray in the DVD format wars. Oh yes, and the PS3 is a bust. *I'm already on record as saying that Blu-ray is the likely "winner" if there is one, so I think this is a bad call.*

No More Dads: Artificial gametes made from female eggs are sold over the internet, making fathers biologically irrelevant. *And pigs will fly.*

Greenland Becomes Green: As the ice melts, Greenland becomes literally green. *Not this year, but…*

Raelians Need Not Apply: A human embryo is cloned for real. *Claimed, yes; real, unlikely.*

Don't Don't Be Evil: Google drops "Don't be evil" as its corporate mantra. Evil has its justifications, but no one likes a hypocrite. *Unlikely.*

They're Watching You: Congress passes a law requiring internet service providers to keep logs of all web traffic and e-mail for three years. *Highly unlikely.*

MySpace Spaces Out: Myspace splinters as teens head for niche sites… *Likely enough.*

You knew I was going to give *Wired* a bad time, didn't you? And they didn't even mention their poster child, the "$100" laptop.

Peter Suber's predictions for 2007

Very brief excerpts from a four-page essay in the December 2006 *SOAN*, with my comments (such as they are) in italics:

The spread of OA archiving policies by funding agencies and universities is an unstoppable trend [with] more mandates than requests.

The spread of institutional repositories is equally unstoppable… I'm tempted to predict a continuing tension between the narrow conception of institutional repositories (to provide OA for eprints) and the broad conception of IRs (to provide OA for all kinds of digital content, from eprints to courseware, conference webcasts, student work, digitized library collections, administrative records, and so on, with at least as much attention on preservation as access). But I have to predict that the broad conception will prevail.

Funding agencies with weak OA policies…will find, like the NIH, that the policies generate unacceptably low compliance rates or unacceptably long embargoes… [And the NIH will eventually move to a mandate.]

When funding agencies consider OA mandates, the center of attention will be the length of the permissible embargo…. For authors and readers, the sweet spot is zero—no embargo at all. The embargo period will be the center of attention for four reasons: (1) it really could make the difference between effective and ineffective OA; (2) it really could make the difference between survivable and unsurvivable cancellations; (3) it's not binary and could always be nudged up or down; (4) and most other issues have already been settled.

Publishers who don't already consent to author self-archiving are facing increased pressure to go green. Publishers who do already consent are feeling increased pressure to retract or scale back their permission (say) by adding fees or embargoes or both…I think both will continue to increase.

We'll continue to debate the question whether high-volume OA archiving will reduce journal subscriptions, and we'll continue to debate it without hard evidence… *[Suber goes on to say "we'll need the money" spent on subscriptions to pay for the OA alternative—which leaves libraries' other needs out in the cold.]*

We may see occasional friction between proponents of fee-based and no-fee OA journals, just as we see occasional friction between proponents of OA archives and OA journals. But in both cases it's best to interpret this as division of labor rather than real rivalry…

More publishers will adopt the hybrid OA model for more journals. Because the hybrid model is so risk-free, this is an easy prediction… The big question for publishers is whether they want author uptake badly enough to make it attractive… I'm not predicting that many hybrid OA journals will convert to full OA, though that's what I'd like to see happen.

A few years ago most book publishers denied that free online full-text searching (even without reading) would increase net sales. Today most believe it. Today most deny or don't want to believe that free online full-text **reading** will also increase net sales. But in a couple of

years most will believe it and they will seize it as a new and lucrative business model which, incidentally, will help readers, researchers, and purchasers enormously. In retrospect, it will look a lot like the fuss about distributing movies on videotape—a profitable no-brainer delayed by short-sighted panic. *Quoted in full because it's a false analogy—videotapes were never free—and because I doubt this one.*

Novel copyright problems are coming over the horizon. Do machine-generated paraphrases of copyrighted texts infringe copyright? What about databases of facts and assertions gleaned from copyrighted texts, either by human gleaners or by software? What about data (not itself copyrightable) seamlessly integrated with a copyrighted text? *I doubt that any of these will be taken up seriously in 2007, at least. I could be wrong.*

In 2007 we'll see an outcome in the lawsuits against the Google Library project… I predict a judicial ruling, not a settlement.

We've used many methods over the years to educate publishing scholars about OA, and for many reasons this work has been slow-going… [O]ne elegant method is starting to work 24/7 without draining anyone's time or energy. It's simply the growing exposure of existing OA literature. [I]t's easy to predict that this kind of spontaneous author education will also continue to grow.

As always, **go read the original**.

Heather Morrison's predictions

Morrison, *The imaginary journal of poetic economics*, published year-end statistics on the growth of open access (both flavors) in a December 31, 2006 post. That post includes two predictive paragraphs:

My prediction is that researchers will begin to prioritize learning about open access in response to mandates from funding agencies, and the more they learn about open access and related initiatives such as open data, the more they will embrace and support it. Educational efforts by librarians and others will be a very helpful factor along the way; the policy mandates will provide the incentives, and librarians will be increasing ready to help provide the information and needed support.

The most important thing I see happening in 2007, however, is less tangible in nature, but rather a shift in perspective; from debating the pros, cons, and possibilities of open access, to a focus on how to implement. For librarians, the key trend I predict for 2007 is a shift in perspective on library collections, from a focus on collections as purchase or lease, to one of building and preserving collections. This is a subtle shift, and arguably one that reflects a return to more traditional values, which is nevertheless key to the transition. Once we understand that building and preserving collections of the work of our researchers for everyone to share is the very essence of librarianship, everything else will fall into place, in my view.

In the synopsis, Morrison notes that the second prediction is for the *start* of a trend. Both predictions are interesting. The second raises some of my "and not or" feelings [I don't see a "transition" but perhaps an *extension*], but I think it deserves further reflection.

Paula Hane's "trends to watch in 2007"

Hane, editor of Information Today, Inc's *Newsbreaks*, offered this list in a January 8, 2007 article "Wrapping up 2006; looking ahead" that also comments on what Hane considered the most important trends for 2006. I'm nervous about disagreeing with someone as tuned in to the online marketplace as Hane, but I'll offer a few caveats in *italics* within selected trends—noting that I'm skipping half of the dozen:

➢ Wikis will likely grow in numbers and importance.

➢ We'll see more interesting and useful content and tools mashups.

➢ "Widgets" will be cool and ubiquitous… *"Cool" is a personal judgement; many of us will avoid widgets to avoid gadget overload.*

➢ We'll see more experimentation with new forms of publishing…

➢ Video will continue to be a big deal. *But most people will still watch most video in the form of professional productions, that is, TV and DVD.*

➢ Copyright issues won't just go away and could come to a head in 2007. *They won't go away—that's for sure—but even with Berman in charge, I believe that more oppressive legislation is unlikely (and more balanced legislation close to impossible, unfortunately).*

My own predictions

It's not a game I play very well, so I'll continue not to play it at all, other than as notes here and there.

Perspective

Conference Speaking: I Have a Little List

Thanks to Rachel Singer Gordon, Jessamyn West, Dorothea Salo and 90 people who've spoken in the library field, we're gaining a little transparency and a lot of good advice—stuff I wish I'd known two decades ago (when I started getting speaking invitations).

In the spirit of what Tom Lehrer would call research ("Lobachevsky") I'm combining material from five posts and my thoughts on reading those posts.

The posts: "Ten do's and don'ts for conference, work-shop, and program organizers" (September 11, 2006, *The liminal librarian*), "Speaking survey: Results" and "Speaking survey: Comments from respondents" (November 17, 2006, *The liminal librarian),* "Ten tips for presenters" (September 25, 2006, *librarian.net.*), and—much earlier—"Conference economics" (May 29, 2006, *Caveat Lector*). I **heartily recommend** that you read all five posts in full. (OK, I don't meet Lobachevsky's definition—I'm naming my sources, which falls short of proper ~~plagiarism~~ research.) I'm omitting some material in those posts (e.g., Jessamyn West's section on permissions).

A little personal background first, so you'll see where these comments do and maybe don't apply:

➢ I never set out to be a speaker, but I did do four years of high school (NFL) debate, impromptu and extemporaneous speaking.

➢ I've never been a particularly active speaker. During my peak years (1993 through 2000), I established an eight-trip limit (excluding ALA Annual and Midwinter) and only passed eight speeches a year through two-conference trips or multiple speeches in one conference or city. My maximum was eleven speeches in 1996, and that included one during ALA Annual. Given the increasing joys of air travel, the fact that I travel without technology and don't write on the road and everything else, I'm happy with one, two or no speaking trips per year in the future—and unlikely to go past four or five unless they're part of work, truly interesting opportunities or otherwise exceptional. (Three state conferences a year would be almost ideal.)

➢ I rarely *apply* to speak although I was part of a few arranged programs and did a generally-unsuccessful LITA workshop on desktop publishing three times over a couple of years. My experience and opinions don't necessarily track well for people who are speaking to present research results or gain tenure, or those proposing paid workshops: I believe the ground rules are a lot different in those cases.

➢ Almost half my speeches have been keynotes and nearly all of my speeches have been written for a particular occasion. When I've been asked "what's your fee?" I've never had a good answer. Now, thanks to discussions with other speakers and confirmation from Rachel

Gordon's poll, I think I do—but I don't anticipate that many more invitations, as there are so many younger, higher-profile, probably more interesting, certainly better organized, and in some cases free or cheaper speakers around. I won't say I'm yesterday's news, but conference organizers might—and I wouldn't argue the case.

➢ Nearly all my speeches have been to library groups, either at professional association conferences (states, types of libraries, types of librarians, etc.) or at libraries or groups of libraries. I haven't had much experience with for-profit conferences and I'd probably adjust my demands upward for such conferences.

With that full disclosure related to my own biases, here's what I make of the five posts—or those portions of the posts related to being an invited speaker at a conference.

Yes, I know *there are always exceptions*—some well known, some very much dependent on your own situation. I don't ask about money (honorarium or expenses) if I'm invited to speak at an official ALA function during ALA Annual or Midwinter, because I know it violates ALA policy to pay members to present at either conference and I'd be going to both in any case. That exception would *not* apply if, say, PLA invited me to speak at their national conference (I'm not a PLA member) and probably wouldn't apply if LITA invited me to speak at their annual forum (I wouldn't be going to the forum under normal circumstances). I spoke for a nominal sum (covering driving, parking and lunch) at a California Library Association conference in San Jose, but would expect full expenses and an honorarium if the conference was in, say, San Diego—because I'm *not* a CLA member and wouldn't be attending otherwise.

I'm going to combine advice from the posts into phases of a conference speaking situation. I'll mark quoted material with the initials of the writer: RSG, JW or DS.

Before Any Specific Conference

If you plan to do any speaking in your career, whether invited or arranged, it makes sense to do some work in advance.

Identity. Keep a current headshot (300 dpi, reproducible in B&W, looks OK at tiny sizes) and a few versions of your bio [short, medium, long] ready to be emailed off as needed. I keep a version of the "this is the perti-

nent information you'll need from me" email on hand including name, mailing address, contact phone/email, SSN (if they need it for W-2s) and affiliation, and forward it as needed. Depending on the conference, you may be introduced using only the information you provide, so make it as detailed as you want it to be. You may want to have a short author bio for copy/pasting into a brochure, and a longer "information about me" paragraph to be given to the person doing your introduction. [JW]

I maintain most of this information on a website (now waltcrawford.name) because I had a free website back in dialup days, I wanted to make some miscellaneous papers available and it turned out to be convenient to store it there and point people to it when they need it. I maintain a brief biographical statement (suitable for brochures and introductions), a headshot (in color but it works in black and white), a selective vita and a full vita. Email info is included there but I'd rather not post my USMail address and *certainly* not my Social Security number on the web site. The latter is only needed if you're getting an honorarium. Expenses do not require a W-2 and you should make sure that expenses don't get paid as fees if you can avoid it. I also have a "speaking page" that spells out some of the information suggested elsewhere in this essay for what I need to know and what I anticipate.

If you have a blog but not a website, you can probably provide similar information in separate pages on the blog—or, as West suggests, have them on your own machine and email as appropriate. In any case, have this stuff available up front—and check your brief bio at least once a year to make sure it's still current and correct.

Initial Negotiations

I'm going to focus on invited presentations—keynotes and other cases where a library or conference organizing committee approaches a speaker. Much of the advice also applies to proposals (where the speaker has entered a paper or proposed a panel or speech or workshop). Initial negotiations also include money, but that's worth its own heading.

Speaker's side

Timeline. When you are initially asked to give a talk for a conference or event, often it's a very exploratory discussion. An initial conversation should include the conference date…location, the expected audience, what the organizers would like you to do… and… honorarium/ fees/ reimbursement. Usually once you've had this discussion, they'll need to get back to you with specifics…and the final word on honorarium/ expenses/ arrangements.

Sometimes there can be a long lag between the first discussion and the second… Don't purchase tickets or reserve a hotel room until you are sure that you're confirmed to be at the conference. Once you've started making purchases for a conference, make sure you save all your receipts. Feel free to follow-up if you haven't heard from the planning people in a timely manner…

Some conference planners may want you to deliver a talk you've given before, others will have a topic in mind they'd like you to speak on. Use the preliminary discussions to help agree on a topic. [JW]

As a potential speaker, you may elect to give the same speech over and over again. As long as those inviting you know what they're getting, that's not only acceptable but also sometimes preferable, although some of us aren't good at repeating speeches. If you're The Expert on X, you should be clear about how much you'll customize your XSpiel for this group—and whether you're willing to speak on Y. Based on my own experience, I'll suggest being open to requests somewhat outside your comfort zone: Some of my most enjoyable experiences have involved topics or audiences that I wouldn't have considered in my area.

If you're asked to speak on a topic wholly outside your scope *or* one that poses a conflict of interest, make that clear—and if it's a group you'd like to speak to, see if they'd consider an alternative topic.

Conference side

Do be specific as to what you're looking for. If you have a particular topic or focus in mind, say so. If you have a specific time slot to fill, let your speaker know…. Do keep your speaker updated as your knowledge about an event progresses…. Don't leave a potential presenter hanging. Be sure to get back to every potential presenter you contact, even if the answer is no. If you bring a program proposal to a committee and it doesn't make the cut, or you find you can't afford a speaker's quoted fees, or your budget has been cut, tell her as soon as you find out…[RSG]

Don't play games with speakers. In the end you'll both lose. I was once *approached* to do an overseas keynote under difficult circumstances; it would have required two very long plane rides, I'd already been to the general area twice before and the group wasn't the best fit for me. I proposed slightly tougher than usual terms, although by no means extraordinary. Instead of returning with a compromise suggestion or saying they weren't willing to spend that much, the conference committee eventually sent me a note thanking me for *applying* to speak but saying they couldn't use me. If they ever invite me again (unlikely), I'll have an easy two-letter answer.

Money

Up until last year, I always cringed when someone asking me to speak said, "What's your standard fee?" As with most of us (I believe), I didn't have one and wasn't quite sure what was appropriate. Thanks to Dorothea Salo, I've thought about where I want to be in the universe of speakers—and thanks to Rachel Singer Gordon and 90 of us who responded to her survey, I'm now willing to offer an answer. (If you're wondering, that answer, for an out-of-state keynote or plenary speech not part of my job and where the group doesn't make an initial offer, is "full expenses for the entire conference plus $1,500 honorarium," with room to negotiate on the honorarium for a group I'd really like to speak to.)

How did I get there? Partly by talking to other speakers who were in demand at the time I was a hot item. Partly by observing the offers I got from state library associations and others, particularly once I knew they'd be going out to find sponsors. That answer was *confirmed* by Gordon's survey.

Dorothea Salo's take: A taxonomy of fees

> Suppliers of speaking labor—and let's not be coy, here; speaking is work—come in two basic stripes: gratis and paid. Of the paid variety, there's the expenses-only kind, and the honorarium kind—and even the honorarium kind divides into those who make their living from speaking (quite the rara avis in libraryland, though I know of one or two) and those who treat it as a nice sideline.

> The gratis speaker divides into two stripes also: the altruist and the whuffie-ist. The whuffie-ist tends to be an academic librarian…under the gun as regards retention and/or tenure. Solo vendors drumming up business, librarians on the job trail, and folks hoping to move into the paid-speaker ranks are also whuffie-ists. [DS]

There's a third type: Speakers speaking on behalf of or sponsored by their organization. That's neither altrusim nor "whuffie" (think reputation): it's paid speaking, but the pay doesn't come from the organizer.

> A final type of speaker is the clueless altruist, who has more than enough whuffie to move into paid-speaker ranks but doesn't realize it. These speakers can be taken advantage of by the savvy conference organizer; they exist because the economics of speaking is treated a lot like the economics of journal-bundle pricing—kept under wraps as much as possible, and for much the same reasons. (So that those getting shafted don't find out, of course. What, you didn't realize that?) [DS]

Those wraps have come off, at least to some extent!

> This taxonomy crosses with another: the invited-speaker model versus the academic-speaker model… The aca-
demic-speaker model tends a bit less toward the star system because of its obvious substitutability factor, and it's obviously toward the whuffie end of the scale of rewards. There's crossover, though…

> All of this, mind you, presumes a conference model in which lots of people come to a place to listen to a (relatively) few people. It presumes a hierarchy of speaking desirability, and it presumes at least on the "paid" level that one speaker can't easily be substituted for another.

> Indeed, insofar as clueless altruists create a substitute good for paid speakers, paid speakers resent them. But they don't, interestingly, resent the conference organizers who recruit them—not openly, at least… In fact, conference organizers don't have much to fear from clueless altruists who wise up, either. Two possibilities: either the formerly-clueless altruist moves into the paid-speaker ranks…or the formerly-clueless altruist was primarily valuable by virtue of low cost, at which point the conference organizer simply moves on to the next clueless altruist. [DS]

There's a *lot* more to Salo's post, much of it related to online conferences and the fact that you don't need to speak at conferences these days to gain a reputation (I don't care for "whuffie"), what with blogs and other expanded publishing opportunities. I'm only citing the portion directly related to speaking fees.

In commenting on Rachel Singer Gordon's survey post, Salo suggests another set of distinctions:

> I want to see conference-payment practice be fair and aboveboard, and as uniform as is reasonable. Sure, some people are hot tickets and deserve to be paid more for it, but that doesn't mean everybody else gets screwed!

> One thing I think we need is a conference taxonomy. Rules are different for academic conferences, association conferences, and "pro" conferences, not so? [DS]

My experience is almost entirely with association conferences and in-house speaking events (staff days etc.). I would expect payment to be rare for a true academic conference—but I'm not an academic. I would *personally* expect considerably higher payment for a "pro" conference, which may be one reason I haven't spoken at them (with one early exception).

Survey results

Ninety people responded to Rachel Singer Gordon's survey. Selected results that I find particularly interesting [RSG for all of these, but paraphrased]:

➢ Most respondents were "occasional" speakers—78% did fewer than seven presentations a year.

➢ Two-thirds of those participating on a panel didn't charge a fee; among those who did, excluding outlying cases, the average was $240.

- Almost 60% of those doing 45-90 minute presentations *do* charge, and the average (again excluding outliers) was about $340, a surprisingly low figure.
- More than 70% of those putting on half-day workshops charge, and the average among those who charge (excluding outliers) was just over $580.
- Astonishingly, almost a third of those doing *full-day* workshops do it for nothing—and the non-outlier average for the rest was just over $1,100.
- Then there are keynotes—and here, *more* than a third give it away! Of the 25 respondents who do charge for keynotes, dropping the outliers, the average was just under $1,050.

Most people who charge also expect to have registration and expenses covered, presumably, since most of those fees wouldn't even cover the costs of a typical out-of-state conference. (Fifty people explicitly charge actual expenses; 18 are covered by their institutions.)

The most popular exceptions—cases where people will speak for free—are for LIS classes, local workshops, conferences people are attending anyway, groups they're members of, and as a personal favor to an organizer. Ten respondents always give it away; one never speaks for free. (One respondent charges $2,750 per day for an out-of-state event; I wonder whether that's the person who never speaks for free?)

Comments include interesting variations—one who charges for rest time after an international event, one who charges less if it's an existing presentation, one who charges $1,500 per day but will do multiple activities, one who—calling themself no longer a newbie—won't even speak at ALA conferences because of the no-fee policy. One person noted that speaking can be energizing, which is true for some of us—but that probably means the conference is getting its money's worth. I *love* state library conferences and try to attend the whole conference—but that doesn't mean I'd speak at them without expenses and, typically, an honorarium. There's love and then there's fiscal suicide. One statement in particular is worth repeating in full:

> This is my first year speaking at conferences. I started off the year saying yes to anything I was asked to speak at (within reason) regardless of whether it paid or not, unless it required serious travel. I'm realizing that it costs me a great deal of time and anxiety to speak, and that my effort should be worth something. I plan to ask for more money from now on and will be perfectly happy if that leads to fewer speaking gigs. However, there are certain gigs I'm willing to speak at for free just to be able to put it on my resume or because the connections I make there could help my career. Some may not pay now, but will pay off later in terms of career opportunities. [Unsigned, quoted by RSG]

Others argue that association conferences represent professional sharing and they shouldn't charge for that. I'll argue that's only true for contributed papers and other proposals and for conferences you would be attending whether or not you were speaking. As for association conferences—well, if they *really* have no sources of funding, it's worth talking over. I would be a little surprised if I was negotiated out of any honorarium, then found various companies listed as sponsors on the conference program. I would be a lot more surprised and upset if I later discovered that other speakers held firm and received some of that sponsorship money. (There's a difference between altruism and being played for a sucker.)

What if you're affluent enough that you really don't have any use for the honorarium or feel the money could be put to better use? If you're a keynoter and choose to speak for free, you should at least be aware that you're making life more difficult for those who *do* need compensation for the vacation time they had to take at work, the effort of preparation, and the lost time at home. You could consider taking the honorarium and donating it directly to the association's scholarship fund; that would appear to yield good results for everyone involved.

The conference perspective

> DON'T be afraid to talk money. If you want to know what someone charges, ask. If you have a specific amount allocated for an honorarium, offer. If you have a policy of not compensating speakers, say so. If a presenter comes back with a number that is out of your budget, make a counteroffer. If you require a presenter to pay her own conference registration, make this clear up-front. [RSG]

If you have a policy of not compensating, don't be surprised if some speakers you want simply say no. If you require a (non-member) *invited* presenter to pay registration, *why*? That would be a deal-breaker for me, and I believe it's the most unreasonable expense issue around. Again, that's for invited speakers.

Expenses

In my opinion and practice, expenses are separate from honoraria and should be handled separately. Ideally, there should be two checks: One for expenses (which need not be reported to the IRS), one for

honorarium (which *must* be reported if it's $600 or more and which I always report as income in any case). The second goes on your Schedule C; the first is just reimbursement, so shouldn't.

As for the money side of expenses, that should be straightforward: Unless a speaker proposed a paper or is a member of your association and attending a regular association conference, or is being underwritten by their place of work, *their expenses and registration should be covered.* Period. And "expenses" may need to be spelled out in some detail. Here's what I list as expenses on my "speaking page", after earlier noting that I normally attend the full conference:

> Full travel costs, lodging at the conference hotel (if there is one) or a business-class [or better] hotel, and either an adequate fixed per diem for meals or actual meal expenses. Full registration if it's a conference, including social events as appropriate. Depending on other issues, I may come in early or stay late to get discount excursion fares. I strongly prefer to fly American or its partners. I may be willing to trade time for fares (and inclusion of upgrade costs) in some cases…. **For overseas trips,** I normally expect at least business class travel on Oneworld airlines (American, British Air, Quantas, etc.).

It's hard to separate expenses from arrangements, so we'll cover those together in the next section.

Expenses, Travel Arrangements and Contracts

The speaker's perspective

> **Checklists**. Make sure you know who is paying for and who is arranging: transportation to/from the conference city; transportation to/from the airport/train/bus station on both ends; parking and/or car rental; lodging (how many nights?); meals (which meals? are some covered meals at the conference?); conference registration (many conferences make you register even if they don't make you pay, make sure this is clear); internet access, if not included; handout/notes reproduction

> Sometimes you will get reimbursed before the conference (esp for things like plane tickets), but often you will be reimbursed afterwards, sometimes weeks afterwards.

> Do you have specific needs or preferences? Make sure to let them know if you need special meals/dietary restrictions, hotel/airline preferences, time preferences for travel and/or giving your talk, and local information. You may need to repeat these instructions on your contract as well. [JW]

Make sure expense agreements are clear. Surprises can be expensive and unpleasant. What *sort* of lodging (there's a reason I say "business class [or better] hotel"

if there's no conference hotel)? Does the lodging have a full-service restaurant if you need full breakfasts or a late meal when you arrive? How about parking or ground transportation at *your* airport?

The conference perspective

> DO get it in writing. If your association/ conference/ organization has a formal contract/letter of agreement, use it. If not, make your own. If this gives you pause, ask the presenter to send you a letter of agreement. Mail this out as soon as you and the speaker agree on the details.

> In your contract or letter, include all pertinent information, such as: Day, Time, Location, Length, Topic, Title, Honorarium, Reimbursement policy, Transportation and lodging arrangements, Conference registration requirements, Equipment needs

> DON'T change your mind at the last minute. If you have contracted for a given workshop or presentation, refrain from asking your presenter to change topics or format; she's probably already prepared as per your original agreement.

> DO respond to e-mail or phone calls in a timely fashion. Answer questions honestly. If you don't have an answer, give an estimate as to when you can get details from your boss/committee chair/program organizers. [RSG]

There are few things more frustrating than being left hanging as a conference approaches, particularly when you've already purchased nonrefundable tickets that won't be reimbursed until after the conference.

Gordon offers another tip that I have some trouble with, at least for invited speakers:

> DON'T be afraid to ask for references. If you know a potential speaker only by her writing or a listing or a resumé or a program description, but think you might be interested, ask for references from recent events. By the same token, be willing to be a reference for someone who's done a good job for you.

I've never been asked to provide references. For workshops, on the other hand, it's a reasonable suggestion.

Clarity and sharing knowledge

Speakers going somewhere for the first time should ask more questions—and people *inviting* speakers should share the local knowledge they have. The idea is to minimize the number of unhappy surprises when speakers come to the conference or other non-local speaking situation. For example:

➢ Some speakers prefer to use rental cars for non-local events. Some of us don't. If you're dealing with one of the latter and you're not in a position to have someone pick them up at the airport, let them know the good and bad points about other arrangements. If

you're a speaker who doesn't wish to rent a car, *ask* about appropriate means of transportation. As one example, shuttles can be convenient, inexpensive, and reasonably effective ways to get from airport to hotel—but in some cities, shared-ride shuttles can be a horrendous mistake. (I speak from sad 2.5-hour experience, as noted in a blog post.) If you're on the local arrangements side, you're a lot more likely to know about potential problems of this sort—and if you don't know, *ask*.

➢ If you're inviting a speaker to a hotel-based conference, chances are the hotel offers reasonably full service and will satisfy most speaker requirements. In other cases, make sure that the speaker understands what they're getting into. A hotel that only has a sports bar with hot dogs and fries is *not* a full-service hotel. A hotel where the only dinner restaurant is reservation-only, very expensive or very fancy, and where it's not plausible to walk to a nearby restaurant may pose problems for a speaker—particularly when they get to the hotel at 9 p.m. and discover that the restaurant's closed and there's no room service. Need I mention that, if you're suggesting a five-story hotel with no elevator as one alternative, you *really* need to let the speaker know up front? If I seem to be harping on meals, that's because non-local speakers are likely to want to relax, and reasonable dining arrangements are part of relaxation. By the way, "breakfast is included in the conference" may be misleading: For some of us, particularly when speaking, continental breakfast is *not* breakfast.

➢ It should go without saying that the speaker and the inviting group should both make sure they understand time issues—how long it takes to get from the airport to the hotel (and vice-versa), what that means in terms of other arrangements, and so on.

Making the Speaker Happy During the Event

You've arrived at an agreement on topic, length, date, time, expenses, honorarium and travel arrangements. If the speaker's just going to fly in, talk and leave, that may be all you need to worry about other than pres-

entation issues (next section). In most cases, though, a non-local speaker will be there at least overnight and frequently for two or more nights. There are some things speakers and conference groups can do to make sure the speaker's reasonably happy during the event—and those things will differ (to some extent) for each speaker.

The speaker's perspective

> Some people are social and some are not. Some people are exhausted by travel and others are not. When you arrive on-site, especially if you get a ride from the airport from your host, you may need to let them know whether you're a) ready to go out to dinner with a bunch of people, or b) ready to go back to your room and do your own thing until the next day. Either option is fine, but they may not be able to read your mind and know which you would prefer. The people arranging your ground transportation may not know your other schedule information, so make sure you have a copy handy. They also may not be as acutely aware of time differences between your home and your current location, so if you are tired early due to jet lag or the fact that it's way past your bedtime, just let people know….

> It's up to you, usually, whether you want to attend any of the rest of the conference or not... I'm often pleasantly surprised by how much I've learned by dropping in on other talks at conferences that were outside of my specialty. Some of my favorite times at conferences have been having meals with local librarians and talking to them about their jobs and their regions. If you haven't made plans otherwise though, your time is your own. [JW]

Some of us are social some of the time but not all of the time—and some of us are flexible, but may not deal well with being "on" too often. There are many gradations. For example, I might pass on going out to dinner with "a bunch of people," particularly if that means ten or more, but might be delighted to have dinner with three, four, or five people. (When asked, I usually emphasize "a restaurant that's not too noisy and a group small enough so I can actually chat with you"—and that people shouldn't feel obliged to entertain me, although I've thoroughly enjoyed most group dinners during conferences.)

I'm a great believer in attending the rest of the conference and I'll certainly second what West has to say about learning outside my specialty. If I'm at a conference for two or more nights, I'm usually delighted to spend at least one of those nights at dinner with others—but I'll also usually try to spend at least one evening "down," probably having a light dinner in the hotel bar (a survival tip for portion size and "dining alone" I learned long ago), reading, and making

an early night of it. This presupposes that there *is* a hotel bar with decent food and enough light to read by—or a known equivalent in close walking distance.

> Make sure you've said thank you and goodbye to everyone. Make sure you've gotten your receipts in, or know whatever follow-up will be required for reimbursement. Sometimes organizers like you to fill out paperwork for reimbursement at the conference, often there is a form to fill out and return once you get home. Sometimes you will get paid an honorarium at the conference, and other times it's mailed to you along with or in addition to your reimbursement. Make sure your contact person knows that you're on your way out when you prepare to leave. If you have a late flight but an early hotel checkout, you can almost always leave your bags at the hotel desk which can free you up to attend more of the conference or sightsee. [JW]

Good advice in general (advice I don't always follow). I would note that it's sometimes difficult to fill out reimbursement paperwork at the conference, particularly if receipts are required, since some of those receipts (e.g., hotel bill, transportation back to the airport, airport parking or transportation back home) won't be available yet.

The conference perspective

> DO sweat the small stuff. If your presenter is coming from out of state, who will pick her up at the airport? Or, should she take a cab? Will your organization reimburse her for cabs? Who will make and pay for the travel and lodging arrangements? Is there a luncheon/dinner/reception to which you can wrangle her an invitation? If not, do you have some time free to join her for dinner/lunch/breakfast? (This is a nice touch, especially when dealing with an out-of-state speaker who may not know anyone at your event.) Does your organization/association require a formal invoice or reimbursement form? [RSG]

You may notice that this is pretty much the flip side of the speaker's perspective. With regard to the parenthetical comment, may I suggest *asking* the speaker "Would you care to join people for X?" (where X is dinner, lunch, breakfast)—and if some grouch like me says "Maybe some of the time, but not for every meal," don't be offended.

One commenter noted her experience as a non-local speaker:

> Too often, I am left to my own devices with no contact with the inviter(s) until 10 minutes before the event… **I don't always desire company for dinner or breakfast, but it's nice to be given the option**. The most pleasant events are those where the inviter remains in contact, asks if you want to be met at the airport, sends a picture so you know who to look for, arranges a meeting time, and offers companionship. [Emphasis added.]

Another commenter noted that you should "Ask your speaker about dietary restrictions or preferences." Some of us are omnivores (or nearly so); some of us have strong preferences; some of us simply *can't* deal with some items. If you expect me to dine at a banquet and the menu choices are salmon and eggplant, I will not be a happy camper.

Consider that you may like a speaker enough to invite them back some later year. You're more likely to get an enthusiastic "Yes" (and maybe a compromise fee arrangement) if the speaker has enjoyed the event.

The Presentation Proper—and Aftermath

In this case, I'm mostly quoting Jessamyn West's advice—noting that, for all of the setup points, it's up to the conference, workshop or program organizers to *make* these arrangements.

> Make sure that you know that you will have the necessary set-up for your talk. Be sure to discuss whether there will be: internet access, a laptop/projector, a white board/flipchart, a screen, a microphone (wireless?), audience microphones for Q&A, a podium, a tech person on-hand.

You don't need all of these for every speech, to be sure, but you need to make sure *your* needs are accommodated. I'm easy, since I don't normally use PowerPoint (or equivalent): I just say, "I need a podium for my notes and a microphone if there will be more than a hundred people." Surprisingly, that hasn't always worked. One of very few bad speaking experiences I've had came when I arrived to find no podium and no way to get one, with the suggestion "Oh, put your notes on a chair next to the mike." Since I had mentioned the podium in writing at least twice, an appropriate response might have been to walk out—and, frankly, I wish I had.

> **Preparedness**. It's always a good idea to have a plan B. If the Internet connection doesn't work, have screenshots ready. If your USB drive isn't recognized, have a copy of your talk on CD. While you don't necessarily have to be able to give your talk during a power failure, be prepared for some divergences from the set plan. Arrive at your talk's location at least 15 minutes early to make sure all the technology works correctly. Plan to stick around after your talk both to pack up your things, but also to talk to people who may not have spoken up during the Q&A. Be mindful of the fact that there may be another talk happening right after yours, so if people want to schmooze, suggest another venue for further chitchat.

Even if you don't use technology, arrive at the location at least 15 minutes early to see how the room is set up, discuss lighting (I like good lighting, so I can see

the audience), make sure water is readily available, see whether there's a timer on the podium, and so on. And, to be sure, so the local arrangements person doesn't go nuts wondering whether you'll show up!

> **You're On.** Occasionally you may not be introduced. Be prepared to introduce yourself. The less you read directly from your slides, the better. Try to stick within your time limit… [M]ake sure you keep a timepiece with you: on your wrist, your laptop or someplace else… If you are going over your time, try to find a way to graciously wrap it up, don't just speed through the remainder of your presentation. [JW]

As one commenter said: Don't *try* to stick within your time limit, *do* stick to your time limit—and *wrap it up* if you're about to go over. "Not to do so is rude and unprofessional." If something happens, be flexible—shorten your speech or find a way to gain some time. You will *always* mess up the conference if you go significantly overtime, even if you're the only speaker in one program. If you're on a panel, you will earn unpleasant thoughts (at the least) from the speakers whose time you've used up. I've been on one panel where each of four speakers was allotted 20 minutes—and, as the fourth speaker, I wound up with five minutes. I was *not* a happy camper.

> Try to keep your eyes moving around to various members of the audience and pick up their cues as to whether you are keeping them interested… No matter how interesting and engaging you are, some people will drift off or leave early. Some may even sleep. Do not take this personally. Sometimes people don't ask questions and sometimes they do. Try to keep answers brief and informative, and channel people who seem to require longer or in-depth answers to talk to you afterwards if their question isn't of general interest. [JW]

Too many speakers put all of their speech into bullet points on PowerPoint slides, then "speak to the screen," avoiding eye contact at all costs. Frankly, if everything you have to say is in your PowerPoint slides, wouldn't we all be better off if you just posted the slides? I can read a lot faster than you can speak…

> Commenters had some good additional points:

> Make sure that you are provided with more water than you need. Sip it when necessary, and sometimes when not, to provide a break or pause in what you're saying. Particularly useful if you're asked a difficult question and you need a few moments to think.

> If possible, have a version of your talk available electronically so that people can download it after the event.

> *[B]e enthusiastic.* This will overcome any manner of other difficulties. You must want to be there, want to speak, want people to listen to what you have to say, and want

their lives to be a tiny bit different after you've finished talking.

People commenting on Rachel Singer Gordon's post also had some tips for local arrangements in making the speech work well: Make sure the room's at a comfortable temperature. Ask what kind of lighting the speaker prefers. Once again, *make sure* there's water readily available.

Finally, Rachel Singer Gordon offers some good advice for *after* the event, particularly since very few library speakers work through speakers' bureaus:

> Do talk up a good speaker. Presenters get new gigs through word-of-mouth—if someone does a great job for you, recommend her to others. [RSG]

Speaking is Fun. Speaking is Work

I know the first statement isn't true for some of you. Many people fear public speaking slightly more than they fear dying. Some people who aren't quite that bad still shudder at the idea of getting up on a stage in front of a dozen, a hundred, several hundred people.

But if you know your stuff, if you've worked out the arrangements, if you *care* about your topic—you should be able to have fun speaking, at least in the aftermath. I was slightly agog at the start of my first international keynote, which was also the first time I'd faced a crowd of 600 in a sloped-theater setting. But between pre-speech activities, direct response to the speech, and the rest of the conference, it was a great experience, one I'd describe as fun.

I've been invited back to five state library associations outside California. Given the kind of speech I tend to give, any repeat invitation is a thrill!

But speaking is also work. For me, it would be *hard* work to do the same speech or workshop over and over. For anyone, it's work to flesh out a topic, determine an approach that will work, time it out, and put it all together appropriately.

It's also time out of the rest of your life. I think that's more fun for younger people. I *know* that, when I dropped back to American AAdvantage Gold status after earning Platinum (50,000 miles a year) for two years, I sincerely hoped that I'd never earn Platinum again. There's never been a state library conference I didn't enjoy [except because of family illness], and I hope to speak at a few more in years to come—but the process still takes time and effort. Understanding and preparation on both sides can smooth out the rough spots and minimize the already-small number of problems in speaking situations.

The Balanced Librarian

In case it's not obvious, I'm arguing for balanced libraries—libraries that balance continuity and change, short-term and long-term needs, reaching out to new patrons and offering *even better* service to existing users. I believe balanced libraries require balanced librarians. I'm using "librarian" in a much broader sense than usual: Not only ML[I]S holders, but everyone who works in a library or who works in library-related operations and considers themselves primarily a library person. For purposes of this essay, I *am* a librarian.

A couple of recent posts discussed people's own need to restore some balance in their lives. Greg Schwartz posted "Snapshot" on January 2, 2007 at *Open stacks.* He hadn't posted (or podcast) in two months and the post explains why.

> I'm sure you spent absolutely no time wondering where I went, which is good, but I'll tell you anyway. I've been in the midst of a substantial reorganization of my life's priorities in an effort to become an overall healthier person. I'm working on being a better, more attentive and involved daddy and husband. I'm working on not spending all of my time staring at a screen. And of late, I'm working on being a better guardian of my temple, so to speak. Better diet, less snacking, more exercise, that kind of thing.

> It all started with the new job. IT is a new world to me and I found myself still preoccupied with its complexity when I came home. No time for blogging/podcasting when I could be doing all the little organizational things that one can't get done during the work day. And more significantly, the preoccupation was negatively affecting my family.

He decided to act: "First, I removed all self-imposed pressure to produce, whether that was in the form of blogging, podcasting, public speaking or otherwise." He then passed the torch on two of his long-standing unpaid professional activities. He also cut back Bloglines subscriptions and cut out some podcasts—and "made a commitment to myself not [to] do any non-critical working from home." It's working: "I feel more involved with my family and less obsessed with work and career, which really makes me more focused and effective during my working hours."

Dan Chudnov posted "A lot less net" on January 3, 2007 at *One big library*—and sees a trend:

> It's a good bet that I'm going to be "online" a lot less this year. For a variety of reasons the amount of time I've

tended to spend on irc and im isn't sustainable and needs to go way down. I'll probably avoid both entirely during the workday, or if it's critical, I'll use new and more anonymous handles.

> In the past I've had a pretty good track record sensing when something tech/cultural is on the verge of trendiness. In this case, I'm not so sure, but I wouldn't be surprised if we start hearing more and more about how wiped out people feel about tech in general and online tech culture in particular. Web 2.0 might be all about participation, but it's a hard bet that it'll play in the VC sticks as well as it has when people start turning off in noticeable proportions.

> I'll still be around, just not so obviously. If you really need to talk, please call me. Yknow, on the phone.

Those posts (and others)—latest in a series that crops up every few months—triggered this essay. Most of it's old, but it all needs to be said now and then.

As with balance in libraries, balance for librarians does *not* mean stasis. It doesn't mean *always* doing 8-hour days and setting your work completely aside at 5 p.m.—unless you've gotten in the habit of taking work home with you and find that it's stressing you out. Work-life balance is a tricky thing: It makes perfectly good sense for one or the other to assume primary importance at times. But not for the long term. "Workaholic" is not a compliment; very few librarians have the excuse of some Silicon Valley workaholics: You're probably not going to become millionaires by eating, sleeping, and dreaming work for several years.

I can't tell you what balance will be right for you, any more than I can tell you how to run your library. I can offer a few suggestions.

Small Steps

Here are three suggestions for small steps toward balance. None takes more than an hour or two out of your busy life—and I believe that, taken together, they may make you *more* effective. You might not get more things done (although you might), but you might get things done *better*.

Deep breathing

Three to five minutes, once or twice a day. At your desk. On the sofa. In an easy chair—but at your desk, particularly after a frantic call or hectic meeting or after you've just solved a problem, might be best.

You know the drill. If you don't you should:

➢ Sit in a comfortable position, feet flat on the floor. *Turn off your PC's speaker* and other "pay attention!" devices if you're at work, so you won't hear beeps for five minutes.

- Close your eyes.
- Inhale deeply and slowly through your nose into your diaphragm; that should take five to seven seconds (battleship one, battleship two, battleship three…).
- Hold your breath for five seconds or so.
- Release the air, *slowly*, through your mouth— that should take at least three or four seconds.
- Repeat—ten times at first, but aim for twenty. Twenty deep breaths should take about five minutes.
- Do it at least twice a day, once in the morning, once in the evening.

I believe there's pretty good evidence that regular deep breathing reduces muscle and emotional tension, temporarily lowers blood pressure and heart rate, and of course results in more oxygen for your cells. It may even reduce food cravings and improve sleep quality. In my experience, it does boost energy levels.

Hippy-dippy Left Coast Zen nonsense? Not really. It's probably the simplest, fastest thing you can do to center yourself a little bit. If you do it right, you can let go of some stress, at least for a little while.

I don't regard deep breathing as controversial. I do believe it works better if you're tuned out: If the iPod's off, the cell phone's unattended, your eyes are closed, you're just…breathing.

One thing at a time: the joy of unitasking

Yeah, I know. Get over it. The New Generation are born multitaskers and they're good at it—and how can you keep up with everything if you're not doing two or three things at once? Maybe so—maybe not. It continues to be true that every study I've read about shows that multitasking reduces effectiveness, although people who've been doing it all their lives are probably better at coping with that reduction.

If someone says "I can't really work without X," where "X" can be almost any other activity, I wonder whether they've given it a try. I think you have to work down to it: Try doing two things at once instead of three. If you read while the TV's on and music's playing, turn off the music or the TV. Then try turning off both. If you check your email every time it beeps, while you're working on a project, while you've got your tunes, while you're also checking up on something else—try letting go, a little bit at a time, once in a while.

I multitask much of the time. Sometimes it's appropriate—no single task deserves all your attention.

Sometimes, it's necessary. But when something needs to be done mindfully, there's nothing like applying your full mind: Concentrating on one task with no controllable distractions.

Give it a try on something you think is worth doing right. You might find you'll do it *better*. You may also find that doing three things one at a time is faster than working on all three of them simultaneously.

Or you might not. Maybe you're habituated to multitasking. Maybe you don't *want* to focus on one thing. Under some circumstances, one distraction may be a way to guard against others. You need to find your own balance. But I believe that, for almost all of us, there's a lot to be said for focus—for doing one thing well by giving it your full attention, at least once in a while.

Time out

Quite apart from vacations (discussed later), you can benefit from frequent brief timeouts. Get some fresh air. Get it frequently, taking walks so you can see how the seasons change. Here's what I had to say in March 2001; most of it will hold true in March 2007 as well:

> I'm writing this section on March 10, when spring seems to have sprung in Silicon Valley. Trees are in serious bloom, gardens are awash with color, we'll probably walk a mile and a half to dinner this evening and another mile and a half back, without hauling along umbrellas and flashlights for a change. I bet the weather's also improving where you live. Isn't it time to go out and see? Take an hour to explore your neighborhood. Go to the nearest city or county park. Surely you can spare an hour or two.

> Don't take along your notebook computer. The point is to take a break, not move your work outdoors. Leave your PDA and cell phone home (I know some of you can't bear the thought of leaving the cell phone home, but it's worth a try). Concentrate on nature for a little while. Better yet, don't concentrate—just appreciate. There's no need to think about the miracle of spring, as long as you take part in it.

Is there a park near your library? Could you take a short lunch and spend the rest of the hour walking in the park? What's the last time you walked around your neighborhood?

Time out doesn't require walking in nature; dropping by a pub for a pint and a chat also counts. I think there's much to be said for maintaining some connection with non-virtual nature; I also think there's a lot to be said for maintaining connection with the people around you.

Done right, time out isn't a waste of time. It may even improve your time usage. Taking time out can make your work and leisure time more effective.

The Virtues of Contemplation

I believe in quiet time. I call it contemplation, although that doesn't necessarily mean directly contemplating something (it can). You might call it Zen. You might call it prayer, although that has religious overtones inappropriate for this discussion. I'll use "contemplation" here if only because I'm quoting previous pieces that used that word. I've also become aware that different people contemplate in different ways—that for some extroverts, contemplation nearly requires conversation. It's still a separate activity from constant turmoil, it still requires focus—and it's worthwhile in either form.

The following originally appeared in the March 2003 *American Libraries* (with a different opening paragraph and possibly other editorial changes) as my "Crawford Files" column. Italicized paragraphs were subheadings in that column.

Finding This Century's Most Important Technological Device

David Levy's concerned about information and the quality of life. His inspiration was a discussion led by David Levy on "information and the quality of life." As part of a speech at the 2002 Charleston Conference, Levy asked a question that he clearly regarded as rhetorical. That question inspired this column:

Who Has Time to Contemplate?

The presumed answer was "Nobody here, that's for sure." That wasn't my response—and I don't think it should be yours. Mine was, "Everybody here, if it matters to them." Followed by, "And it should matter to you if you want to maintain your humanity."

When Levy asked the question, I didn't see lots of puzzled expressions from people who knew they had time to contemplate. So I chose not to challenge him. Instead, later that afternoon, I retired to a quiet spot to think about what he'd said and how people reacted. In other words, I contemplated his question and the discussion surrounding it. As long as you're not overscheduled, a conference can be a great time for contemplation, given that a hotel room has fewer distractions than your house or apartment.

After contemplating the situation, I still believe we all have time to contemplate, but I also understand how technology can lead us to believe otherwise.

The Most Important Technological Device

What does this have to do with the column title? More than you might expect. I won't discuss libraries as places for contemplation (which they should be), since Janes covered that so well in December. Instead, I'd like to consider some of the reasons that people avoid contemplation or fail to contemplate.

The usual excuse is busyness, being too busy to spend fifteen minutes in quiet thought. I don't buy that. If you're so busy that you can't create a spare quarter-hour or half hour once or twice a week, something's desperately wrong. You exercise three or four times a week, don't you? Shouldn't you exercise your deeper brain muscles once in a while as well?

For most of us, I suspect, "busyness" is another word for distractions—the media, technology, and other things that entice us to do something, anything, rather than sit and think. Distractions also interfere with contemplation. It's hard to think deeply with a sitcom laugh track in the background. I find the combination of deep thought and staring at a Web page (or any other computer screen) almost entirely incompatible. Music helps some people contemplate, but unwanted music destroys concentration. And, of course, a ringing phone or beeping pager breaks any contemplative mood.

Thus my nomination for the most important technological device of this year, last year, or almost any year in the past century. Not transistors, not nanotechnology devices, not PCs, not PDAs, not self-circulation laser scanners.

I vote for the Off switch—the device that lets you remove distractions and prevent interruptions.

In the habit of jogging with earbuds in place connected to your Discman or iPod? Once or twice a week, turn off the player and use the time to think about things—to contemplate the world around you and yourself. (If the earbuds reduce distracting noise, leave them in. Otherwise, the sounds of nature even in an urban environment can be nice once in a while.)

Next time your favorite TV show is preempted or showing a rerun, try using the Off switch on your TV instead of channel surfing (or cueing up your next TiVo segment). You might even use the Off switch on your floor lamp if it helps.

Your phone's ringer and your pager both have Off switches, and your mobile phone can be turned off entirely. You do have voice mail, don't you? Fifteen minutes or half an hour's delay in responding shouldn't matter in most cases. If it always does, without exception, how do you ever take showers, make love, or sleep?

Thinking as if Thinking Matters

Contemplation—deep thinking—keeps us human. If deep thinking means temporarily reducing your level of technology, maybe that's a sign. People should control technology as a set of tools. If technology controls people, we cease to be human. Find your Off switches. Use them. We all have time to contemplate. We should make that time.

If you saw me staring off into space at Midwinter, now you know why. Try it yourself some time.

Followup, Cites & Insights 3:5 (Spring 2003)

I cited the *American Libraries* column as part of a multipart PERSPECTIVE on generalizations. Here's *part* of what I had to say, leaving out the absurd generalization of Jonathan Rauch calling introverts (like me) "more intelligent, more reflective, more level-headed, more refined, and more sensitive than extroverts." (My introverted reaction: "*Give me a break.*") I also omit a portion that has nothing to do with contemplation or deep thinking.

> I've received considerably more feedback [on that column] than I do for most "Crawford Files"—all of it positive. The column's about contemplation. The device, for those of you who can't be bothered to go get *AL* or go to ALOnline, is the off switch—a vital aid to contemplation.
>
> As an addendum to the column, right around the time it appeared I encountered an interesting commentary on a non-library weblog run by a friend. This person, an admitted extreme extrovert, was noting that (in this person's experience) extreme extroverts need to be around people—and that they think things through by talking about them, sometimes starting talking before they've really started thinking. I'm an introvert; that never really occurred to me, but it does match some experiences I've had.
>
> So perhaps contemplation in the sense of "deep thinking" is a pleasure reserved for introverts. Perhaps not….
>
> When you generalize by saying that nobody has time to contemplate, you're wrong. (See the original column: Such a generalization was the trigger.)
>
> When I generalize by saying that everybody needs to spend time in *quiet* contemplation, I'm also wrong.
>
> I don't see any need to retract or even modify the "Crawford Files" cited above. I believe we all need to spend time thinking deeply. I believe we can all make such time.
>
> If your style is such that thinking deeply is a talkative, social activity rather than a quiet, solitary activity, that's a difference between your mind and mine.

The e-tool bill of rights

Angel, *The gypsy librarian*, found this in an unexpected place—*Fast Company*, normally a hotbed of speed and technology. Joe Robinson wrote "An e-tool bill of rights" in the December 2006 issue. He's focusing on electronic messaging—and cites yet another survey demonstrating that instant communications technology is making it *harder* to get things done. "The number of people who report feeling very productive has dropped from 83% in 1994 to just 51% today"—in part because of the "distraction derby that constantly disrupts focus and feeds an epidemic of false urgency."

Angel comments on four of the ten "articles" and I agree that some of the ten make more sense than others. I recommend Angel's post (you can find the original "bill" online easily enough). Meanwhile, here are four articles worth considering (three of the four are the same as Angel's choices):

➢ Article 1: There shall be no assumption of unlimited e-access simply because the tools allow it.

➢ Article 2: The right of the people to be secure from unwarranted electronic work intrusions at home shall not be violated. Nights and weekends shall be considered unplugged zones.

➢ Article 3: The people shall have the right to switch off email notification and other noise-makers and instead check messages at designated times to prevent attention deficit.

➢ Article 7: The people are not on vacation if they are still in contact with the office. There shall be no requirement while on holiday to carry pagers, or check email or voice mail.

You're probably not an ER surgeon. Do you really need to be on call 24x7? If so, forget contemplation—you're lucky to even gain equilibrium, much less balance. Otherwise, try tuning out and turning off: It will do you good.

Balancing Life and Technology

I wrote "Life trumps blogging" in late 2005 based on posts from others and my own thoughts. Looking at it now, I realize it applies to more than just blogging. You can substitute "extra committee work" or "professional activity" or "extra hours at work" for "blogging" in the following—almost anything, I'd argue, except for your family, your health and enough of your day job to satisfy your other needs. I'm using portions of that essay here with slight revisions. You'll find the original in *Cites & Insights* 5:13, Midfall 2005.

In no particular order, a sampling of similar comments, all within the last few months [in 2005], noting that I applaud all these statements:

➢ Cindi at *Chronicles of Bean*: "I haven't been posting much, and honestly, I probably will continue that trend, as posting photos to flickr requires much less brain power. I don't have that much brain power to spare word-

smithing at this point!" Cindi's primary reason: She gave birth in late September.

➢ Lois at *Professional-lurker*: "I wanted to warn you that I will be posting less frequently for the next several weeks… This is all part of my master plan to focus on a finite set of things that must be accomplished by the middle of November…To accomplish all of these things without killing myself in the process, I am paring away anything that seems to be excess at the moment…"

➢ At *::schwagbag::* "And speaking of blogging, ::schwagbag:: postings have been pretty sparse of late because there's just so much going on at the moment." Including moving, starting a new job, redesigning a website, moving again, weddings, a conference…

➢ Christine at *Nexgen Librarian*: "It's time to revive this blog from the dead…" Followed by an excellent commentary on real life, including "Don't try and do more than you can do" and "F@#! living at the speed of today's technology… I've discovered that acting as if technology has sped up the pace of life is ridiculous. It isn't my world, I don't choose to participate in that world, and in fact, I reject that world. Thus, I've found that I can't blog every day (or, it seems, even every month!), I can't return email in a lightning flash…"

➢ Adri at *Library stories*: "Posts may be a little sparse the next few weeks. As some of you know the stork visited my house on 10/19 and left an avid reader at our door!"

➢ Meredith at *Information wants to be free*, in a post that inspired the second part of this essay: "I used to blog a lot more than I do. I was unemployed and had a lot of free time. Now that I have a job and a house and other commitments, I had to ask myself why should I continue blogging? Is it worth the time it takes?" Her answer is, emphatically, *yes*, for reasons offered in an interesting commentary (October 2, 2005 at meredith.wolfwater.com/wordpress/).

➢ Steven at *Library stuff*: "Blogging may be light for the next 4 or 5 days or so as I deal with a family issue. Nothing huge. I just don't know how much time I'll have in front of a computer and family comes first. Way first."

I could quote quite a few more—in addition to a mini-wave of blog shutdowns, library bloggers who'd been doing it for a few months or a few years and formally gave up the ghost. Others just disappear, temporarily or permanently.

No need to apologize

Some bloggers are apologetic about cutting back or temporarily shutting down. Others, as with those quoted above, know better than to apologize; they note the situation and may choose to explain it. Still others just slow down or stop with no notice.

These aren't one-day wonders who signed up for a blog as part of a course or tried out Blogger for fun, then disappeared after one post or a few weeks of posting. Look at some of the names I quoted: They include two of the three or four most widely read library bloggers.

What we have here, and what I expect to see continue, is something else. Something much healthier for those involved and, I believe, for the medium itself. You already know what I believe this boils down to: Life trumps blogging. At least it does for most sane, balanced people.

A new child trumps blogging. Family trumps blogging. Health trumps blogging. Work trumps blogging. I'm delighted to see that more and more people recognize that vacations trump blogging—that a vacation works better if the notebook stays at home (or at least stays off the internet as much as possible).

Good for you, all of you.

I'm not putting down blogging. I have a blog. I think scores of library-related blogs are worth reading; otherwise, I wouldn't have more than 300 in Bloglines. I love the conversations that take place. I rely on blogs for quite a few of the ideas and pointers that result in *Cites & Insights* pieces.

For almost all libloggers, blogging is at most a secondary and usually a tertiary interest, or even lower. Increasingly, I believe most of you see it as something you do because you have something to say, not something you feel compelled to do every day, come rain or come shine, in sickness and in health.

Early on, during the shiny new toy phase of blogging, there was a reason to make that effort, to *find* something to blog about every day: People had to explicitly visit your site to see whether you had something new to say. Fail to update it frequently, and people stop visiting.

Thanks to RSS and aggregators, that's no longer the case. I believe aggregation favors quality over quantity. I'm using "quality" in a broad sense—not just polished gems of mini-essays (or not-so-mini essays), but rough-hewn chunks of consciousness that reveal something worth thinking about.

Life trumps blogging. For that matter, life usually trumps writing. But for most of us, most of the time, life has room for secondary pursuits. Most of the writers noted have continued to blog or have come back to blogging, because they still have something to say.

Vacating: Real Vacations

It's been too long since I noted the need for real vacations. It's also been too long since my wife and I *had* a real vacation, for various reasons related to family, pets, and work. This discussion combines comments from earlier *Cites & Insights* pieces.

Psst. You, trying to read *Cites & Insights* on the screen while having lunch at your desk. Yes, you over there, on your 16th month of 10-hour days with *nary an absence*. Hey, you with e-texts loaded on your PDA so you can fit in leisure reading while you're waiting for your fast food order, or catch up on professional reading during slow spots in a meeting, or… And particularly you with the 20 email newsletters and 1,000-line Favorites file, spending all your evening and weekend hours *keeping up so you won't get behind.*

Cool it. Take a break. Do something else. After you've taken a break, start planning a vacation (if you don't already have one or two planned). I don't mean spending an hour or two browsing travel Web sites or thinking about what you might do if only you weren't so busy and couldn't possibly think of actually leaving since after all how would that look if you weren't there every day staying on top of stuff and showing how urgent life really is anyway who are you to say that I should interrupt my hard climb up the economic ladder who has time for all that nonsense I thought it was your job to summarize PC reviews and interesting articles so I could crowd even more into my busy day certainly not to tell me that I need leisure time that's for old folks and wimps better get another cup of coffee there's a long day ahead

Go somewhere new this summer (or this spring, if you have that flexibility). You may be one of those sane people who do take at least one real vacation a year—but who tend to take the *same* vacation every year. Traditional vacations can be refreshing, peaceful, and eminently worthwhile. But once in a while you need to do something new.

We live in a pleasant neighborhood, with great little restaurants, beautiful parks nearby, wonderful climate, and all the glories and diversions of Northern California an hour or two away. I'd be surprised if any reader is more than two hours away from spectacular scenery, new places to see and new activities to enjoy. You can make a great vacation from a series of day trips—but sometimes even that's not enough.

I do these reminders every so often because I know too many people treat vacations as disposable extras, not vital parts of healthy lives. (When you're up to your nose in snow and your ears in committee meetings, budget crises and firewall failures, who has time to think about Costa Rica or the Natchez Trace?)

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

Some people get the greatest pleasure from repetitive vacations—going the same place every year. I believe that's great as *part* of a vacation plan, but there's merit to travel and discovery. Maybe one week at your regular inn or ranch or amusement park or ski resort, and another week doing something new?

Plan a true getaway. Go somewhere you've never been. Go out of state at least; maybe try another country, another continent. That doesn't have to cost a fortune. You'd be surprised how cheaply you can go to Iceland as a stopover on your way to Europe, for example. Central America continues to be a bargain, with the world's second longest barrier reef off Belize and the natural beauty of Costa Rica. Going a little further, and without even hunting for bargains, I see $529 for 6 nights in Ireland or Prague (including air, land, and lodging—hotels in Prague, bed & breakfast in Ireland).[2001 prices]

Make It Real

Real vacations mean vacating—leaving home, leaving work behind, ideally leaving your technology behind as well. Taking a few days to get stuff done around the house (or lie around reading and taking walks) is great, but it's not what a vacation should be.

To me, a true vacation means:
➢ Being away for at least a week.
➢ Being somewhere and doing something that discourages thoughts of work.
➢ "Turning off": ignoring your blog and your aggregator, letting email stack up, setting

aside IM. Ideally, you'll leave your notebooks, PDAs, and maybe (gasp) cell phones at home, although that may be too much too ask.

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

Plan a cruise. Plan a train trip (while you still can). Look into places of interest within a few hours of your home. You don't have to break the bank. You do have to break your daily habits and thought patterns. Enjoy the differences you'll find if you look for them (which does mean getting away from McDonald's and finding local color). You don't have to go to Nuku Hiva for a touch of the exotic (although we did love it). Paducah has its exotic side as well.

Get away. It will do you good.

Conclusion

If you're a balanced librarian, you'll keep learning throughout your career. You'll look at new areas, delve deeper into a few specialties, apply what you learn to your library's needs, and help your library improve.

You'll also learn to balance fascination and skepticism, urgency and continuity, work and life. You'll learn to filter the valuable suggestions sometimes buried in confrontational assertions, while ignoring the calls for revolution and transformation.

If you're lucky, your job will become a career and will have elements of a calling—you may even find that you're passionate about your job. That's not mandatory; you can be a first-rate library staff member without ever becoming so enthusiastic that you freely work extra hours or take work home with you.

Will you reach the point when you've heard it all, learned all you want to learn, and just want to go on doing what you do? Some do, and in some situations that can't be avoided, but it's never ideal. If you're just serving time until that last paycheck, you become an obstacle to change within the library—and a library in stasis is an unbalanced library that will eventually be in trouble.

I'm not a GenXer exhorting you to youthful energies. I'm not even a Baby Boomer. I've been working full time in the library field since 1968, and have been in the field since 1963. I've had years where work wasn't very fulfilling, times where there was more frustration than triumph, times when I couldn't honestly say things were moving forward.

I look forward to what the next decade will bring in my overlapping interests of libraries, technology, policy, and media. I look forward to seeing what will happen and helping it along. So can you—and you can do it better as a balanced librarian.

Following Up and Feedback
Twenty Things

Laura Cohen (*Library 2.0: An academic's perspective*) offers clarifications regarding my comments about "Twenty things I want to ask our users" in *Cites & Insights* 7.1:

> I'd just like to point out that my suggestions for "Twenty Things I Want to Ask Our Users" were not meant to be final wording, and certainly not meant to be asked all at one time and in one way. I'm not sure why you interpreted my entry as suggesting this. Also, asking about student blogging is important in my institution because we are considering setting up a campus-wide blogging project along the lines of the University of Minnesota's UThink project. Before you offer a service, first check out the need, eh? I'm sure you noticed that some of the questions were specific to my institution.

While it was not my intent to suggest I thought Cohen intended to ask all the questions at one time, I can see my wording was open to interpretation—as was her post. My apologies for the misinterpretation.

Belatedly…

Justine Roberts sent a lengthy comment regarding my suggestion that it's easy and cheap to backup to CDs and DVDs. The comment arrived last June—and got lost in my paperwork. Roberts' point, spelled out in a detailed tale of woe, is that CD and DVD backups *don't always work*—in her experience, DVDs have been particularly problematic. Some of the burning software has clumsy user interfaces, but the real problem is backups with unreadable or corrupt files.

I won't run the whole comment at this point; things have changed since then. My own experience with using CD-R backups has been good (fortunately infrequent!), but I can't speak for others. "Good" needs to be qualified. I mostly burn audio CDs, and I

know that audio CDs used in a car radio can become damaged, particularly if the car sits in the hot sun with the CD in the player.

But I also ran into unusually poor results for a while—and finally a situation where the CD burner *wouldn't read* a pressed CD. This was a $30 el cheapo replacement for the burner that came with my 4.5-year-old Gateway, when that burner stopped working after two or three years (the laser died).

This time—about a year ago—I decided to go for a name brand, which was also a DVD burner as well as CD burner. Fortunately, high-rated name brands have gotten so much cheaper that I still only spent $60 or $70. The CDs I burn seem to be lasting very well. This inclines me to believe that the cheapo burner had been marginal from day one, burning CD-Rs that were barely within spec.

Moral? Maybe none—but if you're having loads of trouble with unreadable CD-Rs and DVD+-Rs, the problem may be with the drive itself, not the media. A DVD burner is a highly complex bit of precision engineering; maybe it *should* cost more than $30 or $40.

"C&I is Not a Blog"

John Dupuis (*Confessions of a science librarian)* sent me email that I thought deserved wider distribution; he consented to have it used as feedback.

> I just want to add my voice to those who've already thanked you for the thought provoking essay on Blogging in the most recent C&I.

> It's particularly thought provoking for me right now because I'm working on a presentation for the Ontario Library Association annual conference in January about librarians (and other library people) using blogs for professional development. As a result, I'm thinking alot these days about why we blog. Do we (i.e. library people in general and me in particular) do it so we can be popular and have a lot of friends? Do we do it so we can be seen as experts and movers-and-shakers? Do we do it to force ourselves to think about important issues, to learn from and share our thoughts with our colleagues? Obviously, I'm promoting the latter.

> But it's hard to deny that most of us would like to be at least a little of the former two; I certainly check my stats in extremedm, *Google Analytics* and technorati on a fairly regular basis and I've certainly made an effort to post more frequently and, hopefully, more thoughtfully in the last couple of months in a kind of experiment to see if the stats go up. (A little so far)

> So, my dilemma and what I think ties into your essay: What to I encourage my audience at the conference to do? I certainly plan to encourage them to read and comment on blogs, but do I encourage them to start their own without creating the expectation that they'll all be a-listers in a matter of months? It can be done, an impact can happen very quickly. I think Meredith Farkas shot to the top fairly quickly and Laura Cohen seems to be making an impact with a newish blog, but those are certainly exceptions to the rule. Looking at the 500+ blogs that LISZEN covers and the experience you had this past spring/summer, there's also an awful lot of blogs that aren't getting a lot of readership.

> The expectation I would like to create when I encourage people to start to blog is that they should do it to enrich their own understanding of the field, to use the writing process to help themselves understand and explore issues important to them, to prod themselves into reading more professional literature and reacting to it actively rather than reading it passively. With this idea, any impact & popularity is a bonus. That's certainly how I started, and though I'm weirdly fascinated by my own modest popularity and impact, I've certainly not done an awful lot to promote my own blog or to hunt down promotional/speaking engagements. A good example is my newest blog (yes, I have 3). I started a new cooking blog a couple of months ago to compliment my existing CoaSL and my Reading Diary. Well, within those few short weeks, I'm getting as many hits on the cooking blog as on the reading diary, which has been going for a couple of years. Does this mean I'm a better cook than book reviewer? Or that more people care about food than books? I'm sure there's a lesson to us all in there somewhere, but I'm not sure what. (The other two blogs are imaginatively URLed http://jdupuis2.blogpot.com and http://jdupuis3.blogspot.com)

> Anyways, thanks for helping me focus and deepen my own explorations of why we blog and what we should expect to get out of it.

URL: citesandinsights.info/civ7i2.pdf