Bet You Missed It/Press Clippings/In the News

Rosann Bazirjian
Syracuse University
Bet You Missed It

Press Clippings — In the News — Carefully Selected by Your Crack Staff of News Sleuths
Column Editor: Rosann Bazirjian
(Syracuse University)

Don’t Discard Those Cards
by Joan Losio
(University of Northern Iowa)

Most libraries have been welcoming the closing and eventual destruction of their card catalogs in favor of the new, online version. But many researchers regard this movement with as much horror as the burning of a whole library. Though online catalogs offer undeniable benefits, card catalogs were user-friendly in their own ways.

Besides certain advantages in searching which will be lost with the demise of the card catalog, a great deal of history will be lost as well. For one reason or another, lots of information which was stored on cards is not transcribed into the machine-readable version. This information could be in the form of special notes added by librarians, typographic differences in cards which help to indicate their age (don’t forget handwritten cards), or even the smudges on the tops of the cards which help to reveal subject areas of particular interest. Unavoidable errors in transcribing card data to machines also account for a loss of access to information.

Advancing technology may help to solve some of the many problems users of online catalogs currently face in trying to search them. However, librarians, the traditional guardians of the information record, are urged to rethink this destruction of a potentially valuable intellectual record.


The Yellow Brick Road
by Sandy Beehler
(Cornell University)

On January 11th, Vice-President Al Gore outlined a legislative package that included deregulation necessary to the laying of the information superhighway. Telephone and cable-TV firms will be able to dabble in each other’s businesses; competition between local and long-distance telephone companies will also be allowed. This legislation is crucial to attract private investment. It removes the 1984 Cable Act’s cross-ownership restriction, though Baby Bells will be barred from acquiring cable firms in the home territory for five years. It also allows them to enter the long-distance market.

In return, regional telephone companies must make their networks available to independents. In addition, Mr. Gore challenged the industry to make free links from the information superhighway to classrooms, libraries and hospitals. Bell Atlantic and TCI have already unveiled plans to hook up 26,000 schools to the network, allaying fears that the information available over the superhighway will be a privilege of those with money for network connections.


The Place to Be
by Rosann Bazirjian
(Syracuse University)

The Netplex is an area 20 square miles in Washington, DC, and is now said to be the great center of technology for the next century. With 1206 technology centers within this radius, the Netplex far surpasses the Research Triangle with 241 centers and the Boston and Route 128 area with 1160 centers. Only Silicon Valley with 1845 technology centers surpasses this new area now being described as a “telecommunications rain forest.”

The high-tech companies inside the Netplex fall into four categories: Pipeline Owners which build, sell and rent out high-speed lines (such as Sprint, MCI); Leased-Line Providers which sell Internet connections to corporations (such as PSI, UUNET and Sprint); Dial-Ups which also hook people to the Internet but on a smaller-scale (such as Digital Express, ClarkNet); and Campus Followers which are those companies making a living from internetworking in the Washington area (such as Network Solutions, Defense Data Network). This is an interesting article, complete with a road map to the Netplex.


What’s It all About?
by Rosann Bazirjian
(Syracuse University)

This is a truly informational article about the Internet, what it is and how it operates. It provides the novice with some pretty basic facts, but also gives further insight into the uses that business corporations make of their Internet connections. One interesting point of note is that James Glick, author of Chaos, is supplying businesses and consumers in New York City with access to the Internet via a service called Pipeline. The article begins to focus on how corporations such as IBM and GE are utilizing the Internet, and concludes with a lengthy discussion on Mosaic and the World Wide Web. Mosaic is described by Anthony Rutkowski of the Internet Society as the “Internet killer application.” This is useful reading for the individual who wants to know more about how the Internet works, in layman’s terms.

The Interactive Highway: Would Mickey Approve?
by Rosann Bazirjian
(Syracuse University)

This is an article about what the future will bring in terms of interactive shopping, through the eyes of Bill Gates, for one. He claims interactive shopping is inevitable, but the extent to which the technology develops has yet to be seen. Once two-way data communication is in place, consumers will be able to browse databases on their television sets filled with movie choices, video game options and product information, and they will also be able to transmit their orders instantly. It is predicted that "techno-charged direct marketing" will capture 15% of all sales by the end of this decade, with annual revenues of over $300 billion.

The article continues to discuss, in detail, some experimental systems, such as Time Warner's network in Orlando and how it operates. It is truly fascinating. The author refers to such networks as "electronic Disneylands, (or) cybernetic theme parks."


You Want It When?
by Rosann Bazirjian
(Syracuse University)

This is a light-hearted article about custom-made computers, being offered by Dell Computer. This "build-to-order system" has been going on since 1984, when founder Michael Dell started to assemble machines in his college dormitory room. The author says that Dell's "Burger-King assembly lines" are the envy of the computer industry, so much so that Compaq is restructuring its logistics operations to accomplish the same sort of flexibility. John Varol, director of manufacturing operations at Dell, calls his operation "mass customization," which he says is a lot easier than sending hundreds of orders down the line. The article continues with a photo essay on what takes place from the time Dell receives an authorized purchase request from a customer for a new computer. In essence, if the order is received mid-afternoon, the customer has his computer, customized to his specifications, at his desk the following day.


It's The Same Old Song But With a Different Twist
by Katina Strauch
(College of Charleston)

There is considerable flap over the fact that some computer companies are packaging "time bombs" with software so that systems will self destruct if bills are not paid on time. Is this legal or not? The lawyers are debating. So what else is new?

See — "Software Maker Accused of Using Virus to Compel Client to Pay Bill," The New York Times, November 23, 1993, pp. A1 and C8. This courtesy of Kenneth D. Crewes (San Jose State University) who reported the citation on the copyright listserv.

The Place to Be
by Rosann Bazirjian
(Syracuse University)

Worldwide popular opinion has turned against universities. There are two chief complaints: academics cater too much to special interests and students are not getting their money's worth. Academia has become less central to intellectual life and many universities seem confused about their mission.

Universities in the United States epitomize this decline. Prestigious schools such as Berkeley, Yale and others have been forced to cut staff, close courses, freeze salaries and take other drastic measures to ensure their survival. A number of factors have led to the current situation. The explosion in knowledge has prompted narrow specialization; clinging to old traditions in teaching and study produced an overabundance of generalists and a lack of technically trained graduates. As universities tried to be all things to all people, key clients were short-changed.

Because investing public money in higher education yields fewer benefits to society than does investing it in primary and secondary education, governments have cut back funds to universities. In a world linked by high-speed communication highways, knowledge has become a commodity too valuable to be left in the hands of the public sector. Universities are in danger of being left out of the mainstream of information dissemination.

In the face of rising costs and dwindling revenues, universities must set new priorities. As governments look to reform universities, three strategies have gained strength. In Britain, the government has subjected its universities to quasi-market discipline, linking funding to performance and separating money for research from money for teaching. A second approach has been to shift funds to cheaper institutions such as polytechnics or community colleges. Another strategy is to diversify funding by marketing research and by charging fees. Australia has successfully introduced fees, giving students a choice of paying in advance or borrowing against future incomes.

There is evidence that universities have begun to change. Some hallowed practices have been abandoned, industry-sponsored research has grown tremendously, tighter management practices have been introduced. Universities are once again reinventing themselves to meet today's challenges.

See — "Towers of Babble" in The Economist, December 25, 1993

Wireless Comes of Age
by Rosann Bazirjian
(Syracuse University)

This article tells us that the future will be wireless. Those days of plugging in our laptops in hotel rooms are numbered. At first, it is projected that wireless communication will be used by business people who are "on the go," to be followed by scaled-down applications for the individual consumer who will soon be able to make dinner reservations using a small hand-held device. Right now, cellular conversations account for most of the wireless communication taking place today. However, BellSouth predicts that by the end of the decade, 25 million Americans will use wireless devices to transmit data. The article also gives some technical information about how wireless data networks will operate, and then concludes with a detailed listing and description of seven corporations working in the area.

Not Just for TV Anymore
by Sandy Beehler
(Cornell University)

Announcing a new product
dubbed the "TV guide for the
Net." Net Guide is published by
Random House and put together
by Michael Wolff & Company,
who are also working on an
online version. It's a subject
guide to the Net and contains a
hefty portion of how-to instruc-
tions to get you started.

See — Wired, February,

Valuing a Business
by Twyla Rasz
(Eastern Michigan University)

Levin, a lawyer specializing
in publishing mergers and acquis-
tions, presents the formula "net
sales times X" that can be used
to value a business. He discusses
the formula factors: nature of the
business; its profitability; the bal-
ance sheet; and intangible mat-
ters, eg: staff, business fit; and
how to use them. (It will be no
surprise to librarians that a "jour-
nal business with good cash flow,
commands higher than normal
values.") The author also defines
willing buyers and willing sell-
ers stating that only if these de-
nitions are met can a deal be
made.

See — "How to Value Your
Publishing Business" by Martin
P. Levin, in Publishing Re-
search Quarterly, Fall 1993, pp.
23-27.

In the Fast Lane
by Rosann Bazirjian
(Syracuse University)

This article talks about how
fast Hewlett-Packard is growing,
and the reasons behind its growth.
In sales, H-P is expanding at $4
billion per year; profits are grow-
ing at 30% annually and over the
past decade, H-P has quadrupled
in size. Hewlett's product con-
centration on pocket calculators
and computer printers should keep
it from succumbing to the
"malaise" which has greeted its
rivals. Lately, H-P is attributing
its growth to its $7-billion/year
PC printer division, which ap-
parently dominates the market.
The article continues to discuss
other areas into which H-P has
broadened its focus: powerful
workstations, personal com-
puters, "palmtop PCs," interactive
TV, and concludes with a dis-
cussion of management philoso-
phy at the company.

See — "How H-P Continues
to Grow and Grow" by Alan
Deutschmann in Fortune, vol.
129 (9) (May 2, 1994), p. 90-
100.

Trouble Along the Highway
by Sandy Beehler
(Cornell University)

The author, John Browning,
compares the building of the in-
formation highway to the devel-
opment of railroads in this
country. Since the government can't
afford to build a "freeway" in-
formation system, the links are
being funded by those who stand
to make a profit. Long-distance
links (across country and around
the world) are already in place,
long before local connections
have developed -- thus creating
an information elite. The biggest
challenge will be regulating in-
vestment in information networks
so as to keep costs to the con-
sumer down. Politicians are way
behind in thinking about how to
do this. Mr. Browning sees po-
tential trouble in the combina-
tion of telecommunications and
entertainment companies as ma-
ajor players in the fight for con-
trol of the information market.

See — "Get on Track: There
Will be no Information Highway"
by John Browning in Wired,

Paris Review in Top Form
by Twyla Rasz
(Eastern Michigan University)

In celebration of the fortieth
anniversary of the Paris Review,
the authors, all editors at the lit-
erary magazine, have written a
delightful and humorous article.
They cover the founding of the
magazine in 1953, its philoso-
phy, famous interviews, espe-
cially with Hemingway, authors
who were rejected and who
shouldn't have been, and touch
upon some of the publishers, in-
cluding the first, Sadruddin Aga
Khan. One of the anecdotes in-
volves a former poetry editor who
felt so sorry for the poets who
submitted unsolicited bad poetry
that he eventually devoted a
whole issue to them, and then
quit. Since the Review has not
been profitable in its entire exist-
ence, a move is underway to es-
ablish nonprofit status so it will
be eligible for grants. Let's hope
the Review continues for at least
another forty years. An enjoy-
able read.

See — "The Paris Review at
Forty" by James Linville, Jeanne
McCulloch, George Plimpton, in
Publishing Research Quar-

Audit Trail for Images
by Pamela Rose
(State University of New York at Buffalo)

Gary Friedman of the Jet
Propulsion Laboratory and his col-
leagues are developing systems
that automatically store an audit
trail of digital image data, in re-
sponse to concerns about tam-
pering with scientific data (see
"Easy-to-ALTER Digital Images
Raise Fears of Tampering", p. 317).
Currently, Kodak's Digital
Camera System stores a pro-
prietary image in a write-one-
read-many-times format. While
the image can be copied and ma-
nipulated, the original archived
data cannot be altered by a ca-
usal user. However, Friedman's
more sophisticated solution, now
ready to be commercialized, is a
system which appends to each
image an encrypted digital "sig-
ature" of the original data, ready
to be decoded by public domain
verification software.

See — Taubes, Gary, "Tech-
nology for Turning Seeing Into
Believing" in Science, vol. 263