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Pelikan's Antidisambiguation — What fools these mortals be!

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If you subscribe to publishing / bookseller industry observer mailing lists, you may have noticed an uptick of late in the apparent panic level. The Publishing and Book Selling Worlds are in Decline, Dying, or already Stone Cold Dead — and the sooner they wake up to the fact the faster these observers will be out of work — so you’d better not pay attention: just stay away from all this doomsday stuff! The Prophets earn their living this way! There’s nothing in it for you — so you’d better not pay attention: just stay away from all this doomsday stuff! And it’s not funny! Really! And it’s time we woke up to it! Everything hinges on what we’ve already failed to do! And we told you so — so don’t you forget that either!

Sigh. What fools these mortals be!

Alright — some homework. Take a look at the Wikipedia article entitled “Compact Cassette.” I’ll have a cup of coffee until you come back...

Hello again! Why’d I send you there? Well, part of the whole social change aspect of the audio cassette was to renew and heighten deep anxieties in the recording industry about stolen, bootlegged copies of their content. The cassette was the beginning of the end of the Album. The recording industry counted on the radio stations to play the single (the 7 inch 45 rpm record, with the Hit on the A-side and something else on the B-Side {there’s a whole study to be made of the fascinating role of the B-side in the musicians’ promotion of their non-hit material, but that’s for another time}). The single would drive you to the record store, where you’d either buy it (the single) or better yet, the Long Playing (LP) Album. Big — 12” — enough space for that beautiful album art. The term “album” was first applied back when 78 rpm singles were collected into a boxed set — like a photo album, see? The LP was the epitome of the content providers being in control of the content. There was no way to duplicate the thing, short of having a Scully Record Lathe sitting in the corner of your listening room. (Go ahead, Google “Scully record lathe.” There used to be one sitting in the corner of the master control room of the radio station I started at back in ’72. Aardvarkmastering.com has some nice photos of these wonderful old machines.)

Back to the story — the Compact Cassette was the beginning of the end of the Album. Why? Well now, people began to record their own compilation cassettes (folks today would call it a play list). They’d pull their favorite songs off of any ol’ LP albums they pleased and put them all together — in the order they chose — on a cassette bound for that most subversive of devices, the Sony Walkman. (Kind of like a Course Pack, ain’t it?)

To make the long story short, the recording industry (as opposed to the musicians) believed this technology would be their doom. Suits were filed. Copyright was asserted. Fair Use was thrown about. Somehow, musicians kept making music, folks kept making cassettes, and everybody was happy except the recording industry and the record sellers, who thrashed
Standards Column — Journal Article Supplementary Materials: A Pandora’s Box of Issues Needing Best Practices

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The notion of what constitutes a journal article has traditionally been fairly straightforward. When we think of an article, many of us picture that linear text item found in a magazine or journal. As articles are increasingly distributed in electronic form, however, the opportunity arises to easily provide additional content and data supporting what we have typically considered an “article” — opening a Pandora’s box of management issues. With print journals, the occasional additional content was first provided on CD-ROM disks. With the transition to electronic journals, these materials — which are lumped into the overarching term “supplemental materials” — can include items as diverse as presentation slides, supporting data sets, data analysis tools, dynamic visualizations, videos or animation of experiments, or audio. Even the term “supplementary” may be inaccurate, since in some fields this additional material may, in fact, be critical to understanding the article, such as in fluid mechanics where visual representations are often the best way to convey experimental results.

One of the practical limitations on print journal content has always been page count — that is, the number of cumulative pages in an issue — which has the most direct impact on a journal’s production cost; more pages equate to increased costs during the review, editing, layout, printing, and distribution stages. In an electronic environment, the costs of distribution are seemingly negligible and the costs for storage of extra bytes of information are increasingly minor. Supplementary materials also require less production since they are frequently used in their original formats (e.g., CSV file, JPEG graphic, MPEG video, etc.), without any need for the traditional editing or layout work. By including these materials in the electronic journal collection, added content and value are obtained at relatively limited cost.

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