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Entrepreneurship in Libraries

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Entrepreneurship in Libraries

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I am happy to be serving as the Guest Editor for the September issue of Against the Grain. This is a great opportunity for me to focus your attention on a conference held in partnership between the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and Wake Forest University titled Inspiration, Innovation, Celebration: an Entrepreneurial Conference for Librarians. (See Website for the conference at: http://blog.zsr.wfu.edu/iic/) I have chosen six papers from the conference to highlight in this issue. You will also see a summary of the conference by Kimberly Lutz, the Assistant Director for Communications and External Relations at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro in the And They Were There section of this issue. The conference was held on June 3-4, 2009 on the beautiful campus of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

My interest in holding this conference actually stems back to 2006 with the publication of the Kauffman Foundation report titled: Entrepreneurship in American Higher Education. That’s what prompted the first notion of a library entrepreneurship conference in my mind. That report focused on why entrepreneurship matters to American higher education, and on the need to make entrepreneurship a legitimate subject in American undergraduate education. The panel said that an “academic culture animated by entrepreneurial values not only enhances innovation in research, it also creates a comprehensive educational climate for students.” But, it did more for me than that.

The report kept referencing entrepreneurship as a transformative, creative and innovative process — one that sustains value and encourages risk takers. The panel indicated that “entrepreneurship merges the visionary and the pragmatic. It requires knowledge, imagination, ingenuity, perception, practicality, persistence, and attention to others.” “Unavoidably,” they said, “entrepreneurship is an exercise in social responsibility.” That’s when it hit home. In my mind, they were describing libraries and everything that we have been doing, are currently doing, and plan to continue doing in the future. We are the pragmatists blended with the innovators, and we have a broad sense of social responsibility. In my mind, librarians are one of the most innovative groups of professionals that I can think of. But, unfortunately, we are not thought of as entrepreneurial outside of our profession. Hence, this conference was a way to celebrate what we have done and to learn from each other about what else we can be doing — and to tell the world that we’re out here!

In this issue, one of our keynote speakers, Steven J. Bell, writes about ways to tap into continued on page 16

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Against the Grain
“Linking Publishers, Vendors and Librarians”

If Rumors Were Horses

S o much has happened this summer that it’s hard to remember it all! But here is a beginning!

Times are tough. But they are getting better for all of us! Several of our long-time colleagues are out of work. Help is needed! Adam the fabulous Chesler <adam.chesler@cox.net> once of Kluwer and ACS is looking. John the perfect bookseller Riley <jdriley@comcast.net>, once of Eastern Book is looking. Danny will never give up Overstreet <danny.overstreet@gmail.com>, once of OCLC is looking. Martin the creative Marlow <martinmarlow@hotmail.com> is looking. Many of these people, like Martin have set up consulting businesses. More power to all of them!

It was great to hear that Xan Arch <xanadu@stanford.edu> got a suggestion for her column title for ATG! Thanks, everyone! But Xan tells me that her column title was an inspiration from her new fiancé — Mike Camacho, a software engineer. Under the Hood, see this issue, p.8.

Speaking of Xan, she is helping greatly with the Charleston Conference remotely and is hoping to spend some time this fall interning for Harrassowitz for four weeks and Casalini for one week.

Speaking of the Charleston Conference, continued on page 6

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Entrepreneurship in Libraries
from page 1

The inner entrepreneur in order to deliver fantastic library experiences for our users. He defines librarian entrepreneur and speaks about the connection between innovation and creativity to entrepreneurship. Doug Boyd focuses on the phenomenal work being undertaken at the Louis B. Nunn Center for Oral History at the University of Kentucky. He writes about many innovative approaches to fund raising and their effort to transcend the transcription of oral history interviews to take it to new heights. Adam Corson-Finnerty focuses on ways to generate income in academic libraries. He talks about the importance of income-producing activities and long term business plans for sustaining new projects. Anita Norton writes of a way that the librarians at Johns Hopkins University/Excelsior College increased the use of services and resources through course integration into online courses. She writes about how important it is to collaborate with course developers and instructional designers. Michael Crumpton writes about how your library “green” and to make a difference within the larger university and community context. Jennifer Calvo writes about how North Carolina State University Libraries raises the awareness of the Libraries’ late night hours and services through its Learning Commons.

Pelikan’s Antidisambiguation
from page 14

Remember: our students didn’t make the library the way it is — we did. It is we who tell them, “You want Psychology? That’s not here. This is the Social Sciences Library. Psychology is in the Education and Behavioral Sciences Library. That’s two floors up. Next, please…”

Honestly now: do we recognize how difficult it is becoming to convince those coming into our profession that things are the way they are for good reasons?

For that matter, have we noticed the burgeoning application of the information sciences in the world outside of the confines of the Library itself? Some of our MLIS folks are heading out of the libraries and into the larger world: some after a taste or two too many of the reception they receive at the hands of the water buffalos, comfortable and content to chew their cud in the academy, others directly from library school. How are we going to get the best into the libraries and then keep them there?

I usually write and speak about emerging technologies. Here I have chosen instead to point to aspects of human behavior — our human behavior — that likely are impervious to influence from external factors such as emerging technologies. I assure you, in the strongest possible terms, that the most fundamental challenges we face do not involve technology. Technology is a blackboard, a piece of chalk, a lectern. The real question is; what are we going to say?

Please. What good does it do to cite primary external factors to explain the strategic picture facing us today?

And finally, to what may we correctly point as signifiers of the seriousness with which we face the future and its challenges?