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From the Other Side of the Street —  
Time to Hit the Books

by Thomas Bacher <bacher@purdue.edu>

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I don’t know about you, but autumn always makes me think about the past and about the future. Maybe this phenomena is based on my early upbringing in Duluth, Minnesota where there were only two seasons—winter which lasted from September through May and bug season which took up the other three months. (Prehistoric mosquitoes are still alive and well on the shores of Lake Superior. Some families have gone for overnight camping trips without ever returning.) So when those first snows and dips in temperature invaded the Zenith city, I was concerned that our supplies might not last until the Spring thaw. It was a time to ponder. Autumn is also a time to begin again. Universities throughout the country see a grand influx of fresh and not-so-fresh faces. Hopes ride high as turning leaves overshadow the steel sky grayness with vibrant patches of activity. In the spirit of learning anew, I searched the diverse course catalogs of many hallowed and not so prominent universities and colleges to discover the best offerings for the library and publishing communities.

Librarianese for the Non-librarian, Instructor William Safire. Interdisciplinary 301. Especially designed for information product developers, publishers and faculty members. Prerequisite: Must be over the age of reason. This sophisticated course is a discovery in entomology. Learn to decipher Library of Congress acronyms. Learn why discharge is not a bad term outside of the Oval office. Find out why circulation has nothing to do with your blood system or why Beaner is not something you drop into boiling water. Not intended for the serious library major.

It’s Legal. It’s for Librarians, Instructor Team: Johnny Cochran, F. Lee Bailey, and Jerry Spence with a special lecture by Kenneth Starr on “If you lie to Eiservier, is that perjury?” Law 512. This innovative course takes librarians on a legal journey through contracts and licensing agreements. Prerequisite: Several viewings of “Ally McBeal,” “The Practice,” or “Perry Mason.” Learn the difference between content fee and access fee. Get pointers on why to ask the question “Why?” three times when one of your vendors asserts that all information costs must escalate at 8–10% annually. Discover innovative techniques on how to really count the number of authorized users at your institution. Even though examples are derived from actual case work, the legal team avows all knowledge of wrongdoing or impropriety. Students must sign a release waiver before classes begin.

Publishing for the New Generation, Instructor: HALL 10,000. CompSci 2001. Get into the mind of the next generation of information providers. Prerequisite: All students must have read: Kidder, The Soul of a New Machine; Heinlein, Stranger in a Strange Land; and Gates, The Road Ahead. HALL 10,000, developed by Microsoft as a replacement for everybody, synthesizes all global knowledge and ports it to one location. The system is paired with a dynamic print imaging system to produce bound copies of personalized books in minutes. Use up-to-date search techniques to construct a document (current limit 224 pages) that...
p. 135 of this work that the “great” 9th may be used “profitably” etc? I haven’t had my hands on a 9th or even an 11th for years but I’ll wager that Sheby’s advice is still valid.

As I remember it, the Century Encyclopaedia was the most used. It’s been so long since I’ve seen a Century I can’t give a proper bibliographic description of it—it’s even gone from my Wilson’s Cumulative Book Index 1928–1932... Of course we had sets of the Complete Works of... (famous authors). My friend Cliff Hillegass had not come out with his Cliff’s Notes until many years later—1958.

We were also fortunate to have a better than average public library, named Beck Bookman Library. It was not then a publicly funded library—The Beck family, contemporaries and peers of William Allen White, a leading Kansas newspaper publisher, were the prime supporters along with several “literary” clubs.

Now that I’m started on the subject I’ll include more about Kansas public libraries in my story about the Ellis Collection—next time.

Bibliography


Wilson’s Cumulative Book Index 1928-32.

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Oregon Trails

There are just a couple more items to mention, both associated with a book collector and a bookseller who is still very much alive and very active, a true bibliographer, too, who has more book stories than Aesop had fables. I don’t know how these two keepsake books got separated from the others that are on a bookshelf in my office at work, a reminder of a librarian’s roots, but they did. I am glad that they ended up in this particular box of books with good memories and associations but sad reminders of book people no longer with us except in spirit.

The two keepsake books in this magical box were New Year’s gifts from Blackwell’s, selected by John J. Walsdorf and mailed under his signature. Jack collects many authors and genres but he is best known for his interest in William Morris, so it was no surprise when the 1990 keepsake was William Morris: Master Printer by Frank Colebrook with an introduction by William S. Peterson. The book was designed by Neil Shaver at the Yellow Barn Press (Council Bluffs, Iowa) and has woodcuts by John DePol. Showing Jack’s range of bibliographical interests, the 1992 keepsake was My Two Oxfo...