Adventures in Librarianship: Convention Mirror Site

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Reviewed by Jennie Vaughn
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Just in time for the gift-giving season comes a delightful new book from the folks who brought us *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie, If You Give a Pig a Pancake,* and more. *If You Take a Mouse to the Movies* is whimsical, endearing -- and it has a fun Christmas twist. “If you take a mouse to the movies,” it begins, “he’ll ask you for some popcorn. When you give him the popcorn, he’ll want to string it all together.” Soon our diminutive protagonist wants a Christmas tree on which to hang his popcorn strings. He’ll build a snowman, then a snow fort, and he’ll insist on a snowball fight. Then he’ll get cold; he’ll want to come inside and listen to Christmas carols. He’ll make ornaments for the tree -- he’ll need glue, and lots of glitter -- and then decorate it. When he steps back to examine his work, he’ll remember that he forgot the popcorn strings. He’ll want some popcorn -- and chances are, he’ll want to go to the movies.

For readers of this delightful series of books, the formula here is nothing new. But if it ain’t broke, why fix it? The “circular” plot is fun and inventive, the text is simple and memorable, and the illustrations are nothing short of adorable. This book is a winner. And if this review isn’t convincing enough, consider this: in the spirit of the season, the publishers have dedicated a portion of the book’s profits to First Book, a national non-profit organization that promotes children’s literacy.

On a more serious -- but equally heartwarming -- note is *The Christmas Menorah: How a Town Fought Hate.* Based on a true story, this book recounts how a small town fights back against hate crime. The year is 1993 and the place is Billings, Montana. It’s the third day of Hanukkah and almost every window in the Schnitzer house is lit with a menorah. Young Isaac is doing his math homework when a rock crashes through his bedroom window. When the police chief comes, he tells Isaac’s parents that the incident was a hate crime -- that they were targeted because they were Jewish. He encourages them to pay away their menorahs. But Isaac’s parents aren’t about to let fear and hatred triumph. She calls the TV station and tells them what’s happening. The newspaper runs a story. A special town meeting is called. “The Schnitzers have been urged to take down their menorahs so they won’t be a target,” a community leader says. “What if the rest of us were told to take down our Christmas trees and lights because people might throw rocks at us for being Christians? I say, let’s take a stand. Let’s all put up menorahs.”

What happens next is truly inspiring. After the meeting, churches of every denomination distribute pictures of menorahs for people to tape to their windows. The local newspaper prints a full-page picture of a menorah and asked the townspeople to display it on their windows. Thousands do -- and soon not a street in Billings is without a menorah. For a while the window smashing continues. But soon it slows to a trickle -- and then stops altogether.

This simple story is a beautiful illustration of hope and goodness. It teaches that bigotry and hatred, no matter how powerful, can be beaten if people join together and fight for what’s right. It’s a wonderful story for the new millennium.
Profiles Encouraged

Name: Dan Arbour
Position: Vice President, Marketing and Sales, UMI Division.
Born where and when: Pontiac, Michigan, June 24, 1952.
Current residence: Ann Arbor, MI.
Education: BBA Western Michigan Univ., MBA Eastern Michigan University.
Job experience summary: 20 years of experience in library information publishing.
Proudest/most recent accomplishment(s): Being current President of FOLUSA (Friends of the Library, USA).
First job: Financial Analyst—UMI.
Biggest recent surprise: How the Web has changed all of our work lives so quickly.
Favorite pastimes: Long walks with my wife of 25 years.
Last book read or literary tastes: Flags of Our Fathers, historical novels.
What would you like to be doing seven years from now? Still helping libraries develop their role as the social, intellectual, and cultural center of our communities.
Had I but world enough and time...Spend more time watching my daughter’s soccer games.

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10:30-11:30 “Copyright Conundrum” — Claris Weary, of Darkmound University Library, discusses how her library has dealt with recent court decisions on copyright and fair use. Darkmound pioneered the use of student volunteers to blockade photocopying machines and remove ink cartridges from printers. When properly applied, such tactics can have the added advantage of reducing the incidence of plagiarism.

11:00-12:00 “Branching Out” — Pinedale Public’s director, Simon Slippers, outlines how selling woman’s shoes can dramatically increase a library’s visitor statistics. “Libraries need to diversify if we truly want to serve the public,” says Slipppers. “We’ve had great luck with classic pumps, but some of the athletic shoes have done just as well.” Should library schools be offering this as a specialty? Come and voice your opinion!

11:30-12:30 “Consolidated Publishing: Where do we go from here?” — Representatives from the two remaining publishing companies discuss their plans for taking over each other, and what form future expansion might take. “We foresee a world,” says Miriam Mensch, Vice-President of the Vision Division of Uber Verlag, “when libraries will no longer need to shop for anything, when there will be one source, one provider, one master.” Sound intriguing? Join us!

1:00-2:00 “Lunch with Leon” — The infamous Leon Redman, of Redman’s Rare Books, reminisces about the days before wood pulp and glued spines. Although Leon will be fed intravenously, you can enjoy your choice of smoked salmon or “penne arabiata” while your host clears his throat and spins yarns of bygone days. Advance reservations only.

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