September 2000

Adventures in Librarianship: Final Report by the Task Force for Committee Review

Ned Kraft
Ralph J. Bunche Library, kraftno@state.gov

Follow this and additional works at: https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg
Part of the Library and Information Science Commons

Recommended Citation
DOI: https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.3279

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.
CAPTAIN EARTH DECODER RING
by Sandra Beehler (Old Dominion University)

This brief mention in Wired of the 10,000-year library effort led me to the Web site for the Long Now Foundation (www.longnow.org). Long Now and Stanford University Libraries held a symposium on June 30-July 2, 2000 whose purpose was "to deliberate on the permanence of information and [the] need for long-term thinking about it" and to initiate plans for a 10,000-year library. The Foundation is also involved in the design of a "Rosetta Disk" a two-inch nickel disk engraved with analog text and images of microscopic size in all known languages to be used at some far future time to reconstruct the "narrative of civilization." The disk is meant to have at least a 2,000-year lifespan.

See — "Long Term Memory", Wired 8.07 (July 2000), p. 94.

DO NOTHING AND DIE
by Phil Dankert (Cornell)

The British government has commissioned a business plan for a major international "e-university." This brief article notes that consortia of institutions will be invited to bid to create it. Online instruction up to the bachelor's-degree level, as well as a new two-year degree, will be offered. "The e-university will focus solely on teaching and will carry out no research." In a speech announcing it Education Secretary David Blunkett "warned universities that they had no choice but to immerse themselves in online activities...The 'do nothing' universities will not survive..."


TEMPORARY INTERSANITY
by Phil Dankert (Cornell)

Does Internet addiction exist? In this very interesting article two professors at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute urge caution in using pathological labels for what may be someone's passing immersion in the Internet. Much of it is devoted to brief descriptions of research that has been conducted on the topic. They make it quite clear that in the next round of Internet studies more solid questions must be included. For instance, the nature of people's activities on the Internet must be considered rather than simply the extent of their use of it. Researchers need to do a better job of collecting and analyzing data about Internet use. In closing, it is noted that "we mustn't forget that the Net has actually improved the lives of many people."


Adventures in Librarianship: Final Report by the Task Force for Committee Review
by Ned Kraft (Order Librarian, Ralph J. Bunche Library) <Kraftno@state.gov>

Objective

Pursuant to the directive issued by the Vice-Director for Informational Information, and further clarified by the Assistant VDDI (as mentioned by the Vice-Assistant VDDI in her memo of 12 June), this task force was formed for the express purpose of reviewing library committee and task force formation, proliferation, and inflammation with special attention paid to the cumulative results (speculation) of committees and task forces and to the possible disbursement of task force and committee members (rehabilitation).

Methodology

To pursue its objective, the Task Force for Committee Review met as a committee to discuss the pertinent issues, plan refreshments, channel former (deceased) committee members, and reach agreement as to how it could proceed as, in fact, a task force rather than a committee. With its infrastructure thereby clarified and delineated, and after coffee had been served, the task force devised a survey vehicle that would allow it to analyze the pertinent issues which it had previously been unable to analyze (as pertinent).

The survey was sent to a random sampling of all professional staff (roughly 100%). Although the immediate response rate was low (no survey was returned before the deadline), the Vice-Director was able to improve the response rate (to roughly 100%) by issuing a carefully crafted email (some respondents characterized the reminder as a "threat").

Surveys were then independently tallied by an outside agent (the Vice-Director's son-in-law).

Survey Results

Although the survey was "anonymous" careful handwriting analysis revealed a relationship between tenure and cynicism toward the committee/task force process. Among respondents, as the years in service rose, so did the disinterest. This measurement has a low margin of error (roughly 0.0%).

The survey also found that task force recommendations are rarely followed (some respondents used the word "never") when they conflict with the opinion of the Vice-Director. Again, there was near unanimity on this question, and the conclusion agrees with the historical record.

Recommendation

The Task Force for Committee Review recommends the following two options:

The Vice-Director could consider mandating that no professional ever reach more than three consecutive years of service with the organization. The survey results suggest that maintaining a professional staff with an average length of employment of 2.6 years or less will ensure enthusiasm for the Vice-Director's programs by tapping into what has been called the "rose-colored glasses" effect.

continued on page 83

<http://www.against-the-grain.com>
Adventures in Librarianship from page 82

As an alternate approach, the Task Force recommends that all current committees and task forces be replaced by a single Standing Committee for Affirmation, designed to respond to the Vice-Director’s proposals quickly and “objectively.” Anticipating high staff turnover on this committee, the Task Force suggests that the Standing Committee for Affirmation be staffed with paid library consultants who are already familiar with the basic purpose of the committee and for whom “objectivity” will cause little stress. continued on page 85

International Dateline —

Another View of the Harbour City

Contribution sent by Jennifer Eagleton and used with permission. <jennifereagleton@cuhk.edu.hk>

Zhong Yan, writing under the pen name Xi Xi, is Hong Kong’s most distinguished fiction writer. The haunting, often morbid lyricism that marks her writing has won her many awards, a devoted following in Hong Kong and Taiwan and a growing audience in China.

My City: a Hong Kong Story
Translated by Eva Hung

Hong Kong in the 1970s—a time of rapid economic growth, and more significantly, of growth in self-confidence and the forging of a local identity. In a disarming style that is uniquely her own, Xi Xi weaves a deceptively child-like narrative against the background of the political and social problems of this complex society. Seldom has a writer captured the spirit of a generation with such apparent simplicity and ease. “The very first to depict Hong Kong from a fresh, human and emotional point of view—a place to live, to work, and to have fun; and for some, there are not many places in the world that can replace Hong Kong.”


Marvels of a Floating City
Edited by Eva Hung

Xi Xi eloquently conveys the mood of the city during the 1980s in this collection of stories. In the first half of the decade, the Chinese and British governments negotiated Hong Kong’s fate, occasioning intense soul-searching and close scrutiny of their society among the general population. The old and the new, the real and the fantastic, Western culture and local perception are skilfully woven together here to create narratives of the hopes, anger and fears which gripped the people of Hong Kong in this crucial period of their history.


Hong Kong Stories: Old Themes New Voices
Edited by Eva Hung

In telling the Hong Kong story, young local writers face up to such issues as rapid economic and political changes as well as the continuous impact of Western ideas and mores. They make a conscious effort to explore their own identity from a Hong Kong perspective and to describe Hong Kong’s special way of life and the trials and tribulations of a populace caught between two cultures.


A Girl Like Me & Other Stories
Translated by Eva Hung

This anthology presents samples from the author’s entire writing career, ranging from the 1960s to the 1990s. It includes excerpts from Xi Xi’s Elegy for a Breast, an intensely personal account of her own battle with cancer. Xi Xi’s fascinating rendering of the fusion of East and West, tradition and modernity that is Hong Kong assures her place in the literary annals of this unique society.

“A writer who deserves a place in the international library.”

— Far Eastern Economic Review.

“Her stories blend sophistication with an unfinching, childlike wonder.”


Flying Carpet—A Tale of Fertillia
Translated by Diana Yue

A small island sits south of Dragonland. This tiny speck, “smaller than a sesame seed” has a world-famous harbour rimmed by skyscrapers, an elite district on a mountain top, steep, narrow alleys, hawkers, street-sleepers, noisy markets, garish signs and borders. Back and forward in history, we accompany the Ips, master furniture makers, the Fas, aerated water suppliers, as well as Alibabas, secret possessors of a flying carpet on an up-and-down journey of the history of a city very much like Hong Kong.


<http://www.against-the-grain.com> 83
Adventures in Librarianship
from page 82

We believe that this restructuring of the current committee and task force structure will immediately save the library substantial time, money, and resources (structurally).

Considering the results of this study, it would be unreasonable to expect the Vice-Director to implement the Task Force recommendations (above). Therefore we suggest that the results be shelved until such time as the lowest geological strata (some respondents used the name “Hades”) accumulates remarkable abundance of ice crystals.

Webworthy
from page 84

A rating glimpse of astronomers' visions; the Astronomy Departments list offers insight astronomers a great snapshot of college choices, and Astronomy Pictures will dazzle viewers with some of the best photos of our universe.
cdsweb.u-strasbg.fr/astroweb.html

Bioweapons

Would you hire a former bioweapons lab scientist? Just how much Pasteurella tularensis does it take to cause rabbit fever? Check out these two sites to explore the fascinating topic of Bioweapons.

— Offering an in-depth look at the Chemical and Biological Weapons Nonproliferation Project at the Stimson Center in Washington, D.C. www.stimson.org/cbw.

— All the Virology on the WWW provides a list of disarmament projects and Department of Defense sites, and the full text of the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention. www.virology.net/garry/law/virobw.html

Back Talk
from page 86

Web. This way the alumni receive value from their schools but not at the cost of supporting today's students.

Contributors to the Lliblicense list on this topic which I read included the following: Ann Okerson, Dana Bostrom, Elhanan Adler, JoAnne Deeken, John Abbott, John Cox, Katherine Klempner, Katherine Porter, Martin Borchert, Michael Spindella, Michele Newberry, Peter Boyce, Richard d'Aigrain, Rick Anderson, Scott Wicks, and Thomas Sanders.

ADVERTISERS’ INDEX

41 ABC Club 79 Candeo Creative Concepts 87 Kluwer Academic
47 Academic Press 73 Casalin Libri 67 Madras
51 ACM 71 The Charleston Adviser 45 McFarland
21 ACS 10 The Charleston Report 17 McGraw-Hill
11 Alfred Jaeger 69 Choice 88 Midwest Library Service
11 Aleris 61 Coutts 14 Martinus Nijhoff Intl.
53 Am. Institute of Physics 65 Eastern Book Company 75 NISO
55 Annual Reviews 37 EBSCO Information Serv. 31 Oxford University Press
57 ASME International 43 Emery Pratt 49 Rittenhouse
5 ATG 81 Erasmus 7 Schmidt Periodicals
12 Aux Amateurs De Livres 13 Faxon 77 Schenkhoop's Foreign Books
63 Backer Subscriptions, Inc. 25 Grove's Dictionaries 33 M. E. Sharpe
23 Bell & Howell 48 IFIS Information 19 Swets Blackwell
3 Blackwell's Book Services 59 IDEAL 28, 29 Wiley
34 Book House 27 Institute of Physics 83 Worldwide Books
9 Bowker 15 ISI 39 YBP

Ad Manager: Edna Laughrey Internet: elalnghrey@aol.com phone: 734-429-1029; fax: 734-429-1711

Against the Grain / September 2000 <http://www.against-the-grain.com> 85

Rumors
from page 76

University, Southern California, Texas A&M University, Virginia Tech University, University of Western Ontario, University of Wisconsin-Madison, and Yale University. The institutions are providing both the financial resources for the project as well as staff time for data collection and testing of methodologies. An article about the project appears in the June issue of ARL: A Bi-monthly Report on Research Library Issues and Actions from ARL, CNI, and SPARC at http://www.arl.org/news2/210/emetrics.html, and throughout the project's three phases, information about the study and its activities will be available through the ARL New Measures Initiative Website at http://www.arl.org/stats/newmeas/newmeas.htm, which also hosts resources relating to the other ARL new measures projects. For further information, contact Rush Miller, University of Pittsburgh rmgill@pitt.edu; Sherrie Schmidt, Arizona State University sherrie.schmidt@asu.edu; or Martha Kyriakidou, ARL Senior Program Office for Statistics and Measurement martha@arl.org.

Well, y'all, I have a huge Rumors file still not tapped and I've run out of room! I told you the summer was unbelievably busy! Stay tuned for November!