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: http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg

Part of the Library and Information Science Commons

Recommended Citation
DOI: http://dx.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.
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 VDI (as mentioned by the Vice-Assistant VDI 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 inflation 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 dissatisfaction. 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>
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

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 skillfully 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.


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 Fertilia
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 with 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 Aladdin, secret possessor 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>
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 are remarkable abundance of ice crystals.

**Webworthy from page 84**

Rating glimpse of astronomers’ visions; the Astronomy Departments list offers instant astronomers a great snapshot of college choices; and Astronomy Pictures will dazzle viewers with some of the best photos of our universe. cdsweb.h-strasbg.fr/astroweb.html

**Bioweapons**

Would you hire a former bioweapons lab scientist? Just how much Pasteurella tularisis 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 Nonplication Project at the Stimson Center in Washington, D.C. www.stimson.org/cew.

— 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/viawebbw.html

**Botany**

Botanists and gardeners alike will be delighted to discover The International Plant Names Index (IPNI), a collaboration between The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, The Harvard University Herbaria, and the Australian National Herbarium. Names and basic bibliographical details of all seed plants were merged from the Index Kewensis (IK), the Gray Card Index (GCI) and the Australian Plant Names Index (APNI) to create the “most comprehensive listing of seed plant names available to date.” With ongoing deduplication, standardization and verification of its currently over 1.3 million species, this will become the botanical names resource of choice. Future plans include setting up additional mirror sites, allowing users to contribute data directly, offering subscriptions, and allowing links to remote databases. Note that finding a plant name listed in IPNI does not mean it is the currently accepted name of an particular taxon. www.ipni.org

**ADVERTISERS’ INDEX**

| Ad Manager: Edna Laughrey Internet: elaughrey@aol.com phone: 734-429-1029; fax: 734-429-1711 | 85 |

| Rumors from page 76 |  

University of 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 Biannual Report on Research Library Issues and Actions from ARL, CNI, and SPARC <http://www.arl.org/newsbr/219/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.html>, which also hosts resources relating to the other ARL new measures projects. For further information, contact Rush Miller, University of Pittsburgh <rgmiller@pitt.edu>; Sherrie Schmidt, Arizona State University <sherrie.schmidt@asu.edu>; or Martha Kyvildou, ARL Senior Program Office for Statistics and Measurement <martha@arl.org>.

Well, y’al, 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!  

**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 Liblicense list on this topic which I read included the following:** Ann Okerson, Dana Bostrom, Ellenah Adler, JoAnne Deeken, John Abbott, John Cox, Katherine Klempener, Katherine Porter, Martin Borchert, Michael Spinella, Michele Newberry, Peter Boyce, Richard d’Avigdor, Rick Anderson, Scott Wicks, and Thomas Sanders.

**Here’s Looking At from page 66**

opment, walkable schools, and work options located near homes. They want accessible public transit, and a less intensive focus on providing parking. A keystone of their remedy is the use of an “alternative zoning code” called the “traditional neighborhood development ordinance” rather than trying to work on a revision of current code, which would be too time-consuming and difficult.

This review would not be complete without noting this book’s presence as a physical, tangible object. It is no coffee-table book, but it is beautiful. It is a pleasure to hold, behold, and to read. The wide margins leave ample space for notes, and fingers, as well as for telling photographs. Most of the notes are laid out at the bottom of the page, which means the reader is not constantly flipping to the back. The book opens fully and stays open when laid down.

In short, this is a refreshing, compelling book—inside and out. It cuts to the very heart of what is wrong with the way we are making our America. Please read it, and take up the authors’ call: no more housing subdivisions! No more shopping centers! No more office parks! No more highways! Neighborhoods or nothing!  

**ADVERTISERS’ INDEX**

| 41 ABC Club | 79 Candoo Creative Concepts | 87 Kluwer Academic |
| 47 Academic Press | 73 Casalini Libri | 67 MAERS |
| 51 ACM | 71 Charleston Anguser | 45 McFarland |
| 21 ACS | 10 Charleston Report | 17 McGraw-Hill |
| 2 Alfred Jaeger | 69 Choice | 88 Midwest Library Service |
| 11 Alibris | 61 Coutts | 14 Martinus Nijhoff Intl. |
| 53 Am. Institute of Physics | 65 Eastern Book Company | 75 NSO |
| 57 Annual Reviews | 37 EBSCO Information Serv. | 31 Oxford University Press |
| 57 ASME International | 43 Emery Pratt | 49 Rittenhouse |
| 5 ATG | 81 Emausus | 7 Schmidt Periodicals |
| 12 Aux Amateurs de Livres | 13 Faxon | 77 Schenkhoof’s Foreign Books |
| 63 Backspin Subscriptions, Inc. | 25 Grove’s Dictionaries | 33 M. E. Sharpe |
| 23 Bell & Howell | Insert Haworth Press | 19 Swets Blackwell |
| 3 Blackwell’s Book Services | 59 IDEAL | 28, 29 Wiley |
| 35 Book House | 27 Institute of Physics | 83 Worldwide Books |
| 9 Bowker | 15 ISI | 39 YBP |