Bet You Missed It-Mousecalls and Newspaper Microfilming

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Through A Glass Brightly
by Pamela M. Rose (Univ. at Buffalo, State Univ. of NY)

Exquisitely realistic, about 3,000 intricate glass models of plant species, from simple mosses and algae to complex flowering plants like the carnivorous pitcher plant, are endangered works of art sorely in need of restoration. Harvard University will restore the models in a $2 million decade-long project, which will require learning the unique composition and expansion coefficient of each model.


Choppy Data
by Twyla Racz (Eastern Michigan University)

The lack of standards, especially for identification and description, is creating problems for smooth electronic resources access. Basing this article on their recently-completed survey, the authors discuss the various issues including usage and privacy and the identification of users. They conclude that in order for standards to be effective the data elements required to describe users must be considered first, and soon.


Blood and Oil
by Sandra Beehler (Old Dominion University)

Getty Images, owned by heirs of the oil magnate J. Paul Getty, recently launched a takeover that will increase the number of photographic images it owns to 70 million, putting it ahead of its nearest competitor, Bill Gates’ Corbis Images, with 65 million. The Getty company has invested heavily in infrastructure to support digitization of its photographic library. Scanning and giving keywords for each picture costs the company around $45, and 1.2 million of a planned 3 million images have been converted to date. It will offer the images through four Web sites—targeted to different kinds of consumers—offering not only photographs but software and data. Mark Getty, the company head, compares fortunes being made from intellectual property in the 21st century to those of oil barons in the 20th.

See — The Economist, March 4-10, 2000, p. 68

Vernal and Vulnerable
by Twyla Racz (Eastern Michigan University)

The author discusses how literary non-fiction writing differs from scientific works, philosophy, and fiction and what attracts readers. It is vulnerable, however, to various factors: reading change from pleasure to information; over-forties in age are the largest reading group; and marketing.


US and EU Vs. WTO
by Sandra Beehler (Old Dominion University)

Two crucial votes are coming up in the U.S. Congress which could have a lasting effect on the World Trade Organization. Congress is expected to vote on whether the U.S. should stay in the WTO and whether China will be allowed to join it. Observers expect approval, though grudging, of continued U.S. involvement, but the vote over China is less predictable. At the heart of the issue is the WTO’s upholding of a complaint from the EU about “foreign sales corporations” (FSCS)—shell companies in offshore tax havens through which American firms channel foreign income to avoid tax—which give U.S. firms unfair trade advantage according to the EU. Other issues between the two trade giants also threaten the future existence of the WTO.


New Literary Genre?
by Twyla Racz (Eastern Michigan University)

What is literary non-fiction? Is it a new genre? The author discusses some titles which fall into this category and then answers the question of what literary non-fiction does mean.

Outmoded Technology
by Sandra Beehler (Old Dominion University)

Seattle-based TeraBeam Networks garnered most of the “buzz” at the recent PC Forum in Scottsdale, AZ. The company is offering an inexpensive, practical way to break the communications bottleneck between high-speed fiber optic networks and individual PCs. Using point-to-point laser communication technology and a small transmitter/receiver placed near an office window, data can be received and sent at speeds up to two gigabits a second from PCs in the building.


Change for a Euro Dollar
by Sandra Beehler (Old Dominion University)

Several more European countries are set to join the 11 that already use the Euro. Greece is eager to join the Euro club, while Denmark and Sweden are moving more cautiously toward a decision. Norway, which is not even an EU member, has recently had a change of government to one more favorable to the EU and the unified currency.


Newspaper Microfilming
by Joan Loslo (University of Northern Iowa)

Several years ago Nicolson Baker castigated libraries for discarding their card catalogs as they created online catalogs. Now he attacks the decision of libraries to convert bound newspapers to microfilm and then discard the paper originals.


Against the Grain / November 2000
When Willie Morris died last year (August 2, 1999) America lost one of its finest Southern writers, although Willie preferred to say that he considered himself to be “an American writer who lives in the South.” With his death has come a number of books, many in the works before his early death of heart failure at the age of sixty-five. Later this fall, the University Press of Mississippi will publish My Mississippi by Willie, with photographs by David Rae Morris, his son.

Earlier this year the same press published two other books relating to Willie. The first was Remembering Willie, a book of memorials collected in the form of twenty-seven eulogies and tributes from President William J. Clinton, William Styron, David Halberstam, Ellen Douglass, Mike Espy, Ed Yoder, Donna Tartt and others. The second book, the subject of this review is Conversations With Willie Morris, edited by Jack Bailes, the reference and humanities librarian at Mary Washington College in Fredericksburg, Virginia.

When Jack Bailes undertook this project even he did not realize the magnitude of material available. Willie Morris was everywhere. In books and magazines, in movies and videos. All of his work, and work about him are in the University of Mississippi’s Department of Archives and Special Collections, which acquired Willie’s papers in 1995, all seventeen thousand documents! As Elizabeth Mullener pointed out in her 1981 essay “Willie Morris’s heart seems to be wherever his typewriter is.” And Willie added: “I couldn’t live without writing...I’d have no reason for living. I can’t do anything else.”

He could, of course. He could be the magazine editor he was, the youngest editor of Harper’s, America’s oldest magazine. He could be the teacher he was at the University of Mississippi where he would introduce his students to William Styron, Shelby Foote, James Dickey, Peter Matthiessen, John Knowles, George Plimpton, Beth Henley or Ellen Gilchrist. The introduction to these writers came through their books, but better yet in person as visiting writers. And sometimes his class would have a young and unpublished writer attending, John Grisham, who used Willie as his first reader of A Time To Kill.

But in the end Willie was a writer of stories, be they novels, memoirs or short stories. “I happen to be perhaps the United State’s oldest living sixth grader. I’m obsessed with childhood and I’ve written a lot about it...” This may have been true of Willie all his life, but at a very young age he had his most famous book, North Toward Home, published to much critical acclaim, and John Kenneth Galbraith summed it up by saying: “No one at thirty-two should write his memoirs; Willie Morris is the only exception.”

Along with Willie’s life long passion for writing came his belief in the written word. As he said, “the written word, when well done, is one of the few endeavors of the human race that lasts and matters. If you write something good, it’s going to last; it’s that simple.”

Willie’s words will last, and finding his published works is easier than ever. A quick check of the Alibris website found hundreds of O.P. Willie Morris books for sale, and the Amazon site offered over 40 titles, while eBay listed a few items up for auction. But it is the spoken words, the interviews, the out-of-the-way newspaper articles, which may be more easily lost in time. And it is with these sources that Jack Bailes has done such a masterful job of finding and reprinting the often lost or forgotten works by and about Willie.

In Conversations with Willie Morris, (University Press of Mississippi, 2000) we find a total of twenty-five interviews starting in 1967, with one of the earliest pieces by Leslie Cross of the Milwaukee Journal. There are two television interviews with Charlie Rose, along with a delightful and entertaining interview done in 1966 by Whad’Ya Know host Michael Feldman. Feldman asked Willie: “What if Faulkner had been born in Hibbing, Minnesota? Would that have changed the course of Southern literature?” To which Willie replied: “No, his name would have been Garrison Keillor. He would have written The Sound and the Snow.”

Studs Terkel, during a 1983 radio interview got Willie to talk about his multi-layered book, The Courting of Marcus Dupree: “I began to perceive that it really wasn’t a book about football, although football is the thread that runs through it. It’s a book about two Mississippians; a seventy-year-old black and a middle-aged white. The seventy-year-old black’s odyssey into the great outside world almost coincided with the middle-aged white’s return to his soil after a long exile.”

This book ends with Jack Bailes own 1997 “Conversation with Willie Morris.” This is the longest single section of the book, twenty-eight pages, and in many ways the most informative, covering, as it does, the whole range of Willie’s life as editor, teacher, and writer.

On a personal note, I knew Willie somewhat, helped get his limited edition book, My Two Oxfords, published; spent one memorable night with him and his wife, along with Larry Brown and his wife at the Warehouse, a pub in Oxford, Mississippi, talking about books, writing, publishing and bookselling. I will miss him dearly, but he will always live in his written words.

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Click One, Get One Free
by Sandra Beehler (Old Dominion University)

Internet commerce in books is forcing changes in the book club business. When Doubleday Direct, one of the main U.S. book clubs, saw a big drop in enrollment in 1999, it moved quickly to grab a piece of the Web market. Though general-interest clubs find it hard to compete with online retailers, the Internet offers advantages to clubs which cater to special interests. Several specialty clubs offered by Doubleday online late last year have already exceeded expectations in online enrollment.


SLIC FOR NIC
by Sandra Beehler (Old Dominion University)

A startup company called Alacritech is offering a new way to connect computers to the Internet that could increase server performance by 800%. Its Session Layer Interface Card (SLIC) would replace the Network Interface Card (NIC) that has been standard for the last 20 years. The SLIC includes an Internet Protocol Processor (IPP) and 8 mbs of memory, which takes over the burden of protocol processing from a server’s CPU. Test results have been very positive, though there are still some technical problems to be worked out.