Bet You Missed It

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Press Clippings — In the News — Carefully Selected by Your Crack Staff of News Sleuths

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Spam Still Tastes Bad!
by Jane H. Tuten (USC Aiken Library)

The author, who is information security coordinator at Northwestern University, offers six simple ways to avoid the junk mail of the Internet by filtering. In addition to suggestions on mail folders and the running of filters on mail, Safian includes rules on how to mask your email address, so that you do not become a target for “harvesting” addresses from the Net. Surely a must read article as the incidence of spamming increases. See — Roger Safian, “Damning Spam” in Educom Review, Jan/Feb 1999, pp. 25-27.

American Library Association? D-uuuuuduce.
by Bruce Strauch (the Citadel)

The band Widespread Panic has never had a music video on MTV or cracked the Billboard Top 200. But they have become a major success through grassroots marketing and the rise of the Internet on college campuses. On tour they gross more than Sheryl Crow and Smashing Pumpkins. Their Internet-linked fans are compared to the Deadheads who just invented themselves and began trailling the Grateful Dead around. Born in that cradle of rock, Athens, Ga., they struggled until they hit on a fan-friendly formula of handing out tickets and social privileges to college kids who would help with promotion. The Internet strategy followed and now they can fill a coliseum as fast as Elton John. They turned down the Rolling Stones’ offer of playing an opening number and instead approached the American Library Association to do a poster promoting reading like R.E.M. Cindy Crawford and Mel Gibson. The ALA said no thanks. You aren’t famous enough. So the band agreed to pay for the entire deal, shell out $12,000 to mail posters to 2,300 libraries around the USA. See — Greg Jaffe, “No Hits, No MTV, Just Worshipful Fans,” Wall Street Journal. p.B1, Feb. 17, 1999.

From Resistance to Assistance
by Jane H. Tuten (USC Aiken Library)

A summary of correspondence with several recipients of the EDUCOM Medal is a clear acknowledgment of the changing approach that many faculty are taking towards technology—from fear to acceptance and integration into their classrooms—and the differences in support that many institutions offer. The nature of the resistance to technology on many campuses might have much to do with the rapid nature of the changes, rather than the idea of change itself. Technology offers a means of cooperative learning for students but one person is quoted as advising peers to be wary of involvement until a commitment to support IT is made by the administration. See — Wendy Rickard, “Technology, Higher Education and the Changing Nature of Resistance” in Educom Review, Jan/Feb 1999, pp. 42-45.

Children’s Culture is More Than Toys
by Twyla Racz (Eastern Michigan University)

Although the demand for multicultural books for children is growing and large publishers are producing more, the books are not culturally conscious. Culturally conscious titles are written by members of that particular ethnic group. The author investigated the production and distribution system and has suggestions for correcting the flaws she uncovered. See — Twyla J. Hill, “Multicultural Children’s Books: An American Fairy Tale,” Publishing Research Quarterly, vol. 14 (1) (Spring 1998), p. 36-45.

The Future is Just Over the Horizon
by Bruce Strauch (the Citadel)

Motorola and Cisco Systems have joined forces to create the world’s largest wireless Internet system. They have earmarked $1 billion for a system to transmit “voice, data and video over existing cellular telephone stations directly to wireless telephones, laptop computers and other devices.” Their plan is for an open industry standard that could be used by competing products. See — David Barbaroza, “Joint Venture Aims to Help The Internet Go Wireless,” The New York Times, p.C1, Feb. 8, 1999.

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What? No Web Site?
by Bruce Strauch (the Citadel)

Borders Group is the most profitable bookseller in America with annual earnings twice that of Barnes & Noble. So why is the stock so low rated? They're a weak no. 3 in Internet sales ($5 million to Amazon.com's $610 million). And even though Borders continues to open massive superstores at a frantic pace, the appeal is dying. Borders used to enjoy 15% annual growth. It pioneered music sales along with books, espresso bars and testing of salespeople on knowledge of authors and music.

Copyright: Whose Ox is Gore?
by Bruce Strauch (the Citadel)

The Copyright Term Extension Act extended existing copyrights for twenty years, allegedly to square our law with the EU. Disney led the lobbying for this and retains rights in Mickey, Goofy et al and this billions in revenues. Epstein, a law prof at the U of Chicago argues that this is a taking of property by government, that public domain rights have been taken from Americans without compensation as required by the Constitution. Along with this, restaurants, shops and bars have been exempted from paying fees for the right to broadcast copyrighted music. See — Richard Epstein, “Congress’s Copyright Giveaway,” The Wall Street Journal, Dec. 21, 1998.

Quoting Your Way to Fame and Fortune
by Bruce Strauch (the Citadel)

Criswell Freeman is a “quothaholic” who sold 330,000 books last year but remains an unknown author. He publishes quote books through his own company Walnut Grove Press with titles like The Golfer's Book of Wisdom and Mothers Are Forever.

Battle of the Titans
by Bruce Strauch (the Citadel)

With Amazon.com holding a big lead in the market, Barnes & Noble has agreed to weave together on-line products and services with Microsoft. But, a stock analyst notes: “This isn’t a zero-sum game. The market is growing so quickly that Barnes & Noble’s gain isn’t necessarily Amazon’s loss.” See — The New York Times, Tues., Dec. 8, 1998.

Feel Good Murdoch
by Bruce Strauch (the Citadel)

As CEO of HarperCollins, Anthea Disney was called the Death Angel because she canceled 100 book contracts. Harper had a book return rate of 40% which she reduced to 25% by publishing fewer titles and focusing on the types of books they did best. She scoffs at the idea that she destroyed a sacred bond between author and editor and insists that her actions were the only logical response and were common in the industry. HarperCollins contributes only nickels and dimes to Rupert Murdoch’s fortune, but Disney says he actually reads books and owning a publishing company “makes him feel good.” See — Dyan Machan, “Death Angel’s Endearing Side,” Forbes, p.70, March 8, 1999.

Head to Head
by Bruce Strauch (the Citadel)

Jonathan Bulkeley, who started AOL's British operation, is now squaring off against Jeff Bezos, founder of Amazon.com. Bulkeley was hired by Bertelsmann after it bought 50% of Barnesand-noble.com. Bulkeley says he has a million more titles than Amazon and better access to out-of-print books. Most amusing, Bulkeley recalls when he was working for AOL in 1994 in Virginia. They phoned Barnes & Noble to offer to set up an on-line bookstore. The call was never returned. The same year, Amazon was up and running. See — Elisabeth Bumiller, “On-Line Booksellers: A Tale of Two CEOs”, The New York Times, Dec. 9, 1998

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Guest Editor Craze
by Bruce Strauch (the Citadel)

Bill Blass was guest editor of one issue of Civilization magazine.
Susan Sarandon and Gwyneth Paltrow at Marie Claire. The
magazines pay them nothing and get big publicity. The editors
promote their own celebrity. French Vogue pioneered this from 1969 to
1993 with guest editors ranging from Salvador Dali to David
Hockney. Now the craze is widespread. And it raises the issue of
blurring the line between editorial work and promotion. See —
Wendy Bounds, "Top mag. seeks editor, no exper. needed," Wall

Internet Shell Game
by Bruce Strauch (the Citadel)

Convicted swindler David Korem swears he rules a country
named Melchizedek, named after
an unjustly accused king in the
Bible. It's two islands in the Pa-
cific although he has never visited
them and many dispute their ex-
istence. He has given diplomatic
recognition to Kosovo and de-
declared war on France. Korem lives
in California where he might just
be one more bank. The Fed's
been granting charters to banks to
operate in his utterly unregulated
kingdom. What will happen next
has fraud investigators interested.
See — Bruce Knecht, "A 'Na-
tion' in Cyberspace Draws Fire
From Authorities," Wall Street

When Men Wore Real Hats
by Bruce Strauch (the Citadel)

For a truly fine history of the
New York tabloid press, ATG gives
its highest recommendation to this
mix of journalism history and so-
cial analysis. Of particular note is
the author's account of going as a
young boy to the Newspaper Di-
vision of the NY Public Library,
an entire floor of an industrial loft
building. There he spent after-
toons of history gazing among
the yellowing pages of fat bound
volumes. This world was thrown
away in 1961 along with the paper
and replaced by the soulless mi-
crofilm. "But the jolt they gave
me—the electric connection to a
grittier, more tumultuous, jazzier
world than mine, a world where
people stay up late, wear snap-
brim hats, and heard the sound of
streetcars—hasn't altogether dis-
appeared. I still feel a tingle of it
every morning when I get my
hands on the newspapers. Espe-
cially the tabloids, whose todays
are eternal." Wow. See —
Hendrik Hertzberg, "Topless
Tabloids of Gotham," New
Yorker, p.121, Feb. 22 & March
1, 1999.

Blown Smoke Causes Hearing Loss — Not!
by Bruce Strauch (the Citadel)

Hudson Institute fellow
Michael Fumento lights into
JAMA, Science, the New England
Journal of Medicine and Nature
for publishing politically tainted
medical studies. He cites cases of
recall bias, data ignored because
inconvenient and studies with bi-
zarre methodology that could
never be replicated. He's particu-
lary exercised over studies that
prove expensive EPA regula-
tions - the study is debunked - but
the regulations remain. See —
Michael Fumento, "Medical
Journals Give New Meaning to
"Political Science," The Wall
Street Journal, p. A18, Jan. 21,
1999.

The Ghost of Smoot-Hawley Gibbers & Groans
by Bruce Strauch (the Citadel)

The world's biggest traders - the
U.S. and Canada with a $1 billion
swap in goods daily - are on the
edge of a trade war. A bill is be-
fore the Canadian Parliament de-
signed to protect Canadian
publishing and TV from having
their advertising dollars sucked
away by foreign publications. It
would prohibit foreign publishers
selling advertising to Canadian
concerns that were aimed prima-
arily at the Canadian market. The
U.S. has threatened a tariff war.
See — John Uriquhart, "U.S.
Threatens Canada Trade San-
ctions In Bid to Stop Magazine-
Advertising Bill," Wall Street

Medical Spell-Check
by Bruce Strauch (the Citadel)

The new field of pharmaco-
cognetics is linking genetics to
patient response to drugs. The one-
size-fits-all approach leads to mil-
hions of bad reactions and over a
hundred thousand deaths a year.
Genes are strings of molecules in
varying combinations of letters.
Get a different genetic spelling and
the drug effect is sometimes fatally
different. Although the medical
industry is slow to change, fear of
malpractice litigation will soon
change that. A test that predicts
the patient's reaction will become
necessary defensive medicine.
See — Sharon Bagley, "Screen-
ing for Genes," Newsweek, p. 66,
Feb. 8, 1999.

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