Call for Ideas-2000 Charleston Conference

Editor
Internet Moves to the Courtroom
by Bruce Strauch (the Citadel)

Competition among Internet companies has shifted into patent wars over who owns the rights to key methods of doing business online. Trilogy claims title to a method of picking options in car purchases. Amazon says it invented customers running a credit tab. Priceline says it owns the process of shoppers agreeing to buy if merchants meet their price. What once was a breakneck, free-for-all of innovation threatens to grind to a halt. Amazon is suing Barnesandnoble.com over a patent on “1-Click” shopping. And other merchants are wondering who is the next target. See — Thomas E. Weber, “Battles Over Patents Threaten to Damp Web’s Innovative Spirit,” The Wall Street Journal, Nov. 8, 1999, p.B1.

Inquiring Minds Don’t Always Know
by Twyla Racz (Eastern Michigan University)

In 1973 the directors of Yale University Press and Princeton University Press, concerned about the erosion of college and university materials budgets and the corresponding effect on scholarly publishing, formed a plan of action which became the National Enquiry into Scholarly Communication. The National Enquiry was sponsored by the American Council of Learned Societies and funded primarily by the National Endowment for the Humanities. In this article Abel discusses the National Enquiry and the reasons why in actuality it had little impact. See — Richard Abel, “The National Enquiry into Scholarly Communication—Twenty Years After,” Publishing Research Quarterly, vol. 15 (1) (Spring 1999), p. 3-19.

Admin Greed Runs Rampant
— It’s the money, stupid!
by Bruce Strauch (the Citadel)

Harvard Law prof Arthur Miller virtually created the “court t.v.” concept and moonlighted for years without objection under the 20% rule. Now (during summer vac) he has filmed 11 lectures and sold them to an online college. Harvard says he can’t do this. He’s teaching at two colleges at the same time. Miller says that’s nonsense. He has no interaction with students whatsoever. It’s just a series of lectures no different from any other ed material — cassettes, texts or audio tapes. What’s deeply disturbing about this is the implication that Harvard somehow owns his course. Prof. Louis Gates, head of the Afro-American Dept. has starred in a PBS series. He says, “I’ve been teaching the same course, with modifications, for 23 years. I’ve taught at Yale, Cornell and Duke, too, and when I moved to a new university nobody said to me I couldn’t take my course with me because the university owned it.” Harvard’s response? Rules and an application process that requires a prof to seek permission from the corporation that governs the university. Cutting through Harvard’s high-blown rhetoric about how Miller is “diluting” the university— to the cynical core, the notorious Alan Dershowitz says, “It’s the money. What distinguishes the Internet from everything else is the number of zeroes.” This is an issue of enormous importance to profs and should be read in toto. See — Amy Dockser Marcus, “Why Harvard Law Wants to Rein In One Of Its Star Professors,” The Wall Street Journal, Nov. 22, p.A1.

Journalist Hits It Big in Academe
by Bruce Strauch (the Citadel)

Peter Drucker began as a financial journalist with an eye for the big story. In 1943 he did a two-year analysis of GM, the first of its kind, and invented the subject of management. Through the 50s, 60s & 70s, he laid out one seminal idea after the next. He never lost sight of the fact that people deeply resent and resist being managed. In his latest work on improving productivity in the knowledge industry he focuses on helping folks manage themselves. He was 90 years old in November. See — Joan Magretta and Nan Stone, “The Original Management Guru,” The Wall Street Journal, Nov. 19, p.A20.

Batten Down the Consumer Hatches
by Twyla Racz (Eastern Michigan University)

China has enormous potential as an economic market because of its developing consumer market, but it poses a threat because of its piracy of books, software, and music compact disks. The author discusses the publishing industry in China and the improvement in copyright protection. See — Ian Mcgowan, “Publishing in China”, Publishing Research Quarterly, vol. 15 (1) (Spring 1999), p. 20-32.