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Leaving the Books Behind! -- The Alter Ego

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Little Red Herrings:
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be flawed from the start. Filtering Factsmade this clear in a report on the methodologypublished subsequent to the ALA report. In it
Christopher Hunter, a doctoral student at the
Annenberg School for Communication of the
University of Pennsylvania and responsible for
the ALA study, came clean, issuing a statement
that his findings were not generalizable to the
wider Internet. In fact, as has been shown, the
exact opposite is true. Unsurprisingly, ALA has
since dropped the report from its Website but
without fanfare or correction. But even if it
could be shown that filtering did block 25 per-
cent of good information, the trade-off seems
to me a good one. Get rid of 100 percent of the
peace water on the Web and have 75 percent of
good information. Again, ten years ago we
didn’t have access to 100 percent of the Web.

Myth Four: Most People Favor a
“Filterless” Internet: As must be obvious by
now, even librarians disagree with this statement.
Moreover, states issuing requirements for fil-
tering are popping up everywhere. South Car-
olina, Wisconsin, Utah, Michigan, Alabama,
North Carolina and Missouri have filtering laws
on the books, or ones pending. In a U. S. Su-
preme Court case brought about by six Vir-
ginia professors, the high Court rebuffed them
by refusing to take the case and upholding the
U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit.
The state argued that the law prevents employ-
eses from wasting time and from creating a sex-
ually hostile workplace and the nation’s highest
court in the land upheld that ruling just this year.
Moreover, evidence mounts that libraries are
becoming not only the most readily available
purveyors of pornography, but also key targets
for pedophiles. The pedophile monitoring
panel, PedsWatch.org, has confirmed that on-
line pedophiles are selling each other to use pub-
lic libraries to download child pornography.
Finally, even the argument that this is more clap-
trap from the wild-eyed Right no longer obtains:
just three years ago, both Al Gore and Hillary
Rodham Clinton publicly came down on the
side of filtering the Internet!

What is clear from all of this is that ALA
has an odd axe to grind: It wishes to vouchsafe
the promulgation of pornography. Two sum-
mers ago, ALA’s annual convention offered a
panel on exotica in libraries. The enticement,
so to speak, read: “The main focus will be on
bibliographic selection along a number of dif-
ferent dimensions [and] ... explicitness: PG, R,
and X. Different sexual subject areas will also
be covered: ‘vanilla’ heterosexual, lesbian, gay,
vampire, SM, anything goes, as well as factors
like literary quality, audience, and trends... The
Modern Language Association now has a ri-
val! Since libraries have never collected such
materials in print (incidentally, the strongest
argument in favor of filters), the session should
help further ALA’s argument that such material
is “information.”

The argument that filters restricted informa-
tion leads to the obvious question, what kind
of information? If ALA argues that this is sex edu-
cation, surely no one will agree. What else is
there? Nothing. Horace understood human
nature better than most moderns: “The mind,”
he wrote, “is more easily stirred by the eye
than by the ear.”
The issue refuses to go away no matter how
hard ALA and its minions wish it would. Li-
brarians who flaunt their intellectual freedom
credentials may find danger ahead. The
Greenville County (S.C.) Commission un-
seated four of the five incumbent library trust-
cees seeking reappointment to the 11-member
body. The commission’s February 15, 2000,
action came one month after the library board
resisted public pressure to have blocking software
installed, opting instead to require written
parental permission before minors can surf the
Internet on the library’s unfiltered computers.
The library’s director also felt the axe fall. Last
fall in Oklahoma, after a director made a grand
stand for a filterless Internet, local voters re-
jected by a wide margin the library’s bond bill.
This could be a trend.

While some librarians increasingly opt for
the “toss on the shoulder” approach (also de-
veloped by ALA), parents are becom-
ing increasingly angry at the refusal of librar-
ians to act in loco parentis when their children
come to call. The end result will be a battle
royal. Oddly, a few years ago we nearly de-
stroyed the apple industry because eating 740
alat-reated apples everyday for 70 years might
cause cancer. We did it for the children. Today,
however, apparently 100 million pornographic
sites are not too many for our kids. Hey, they
might wish those famous dancing hamsters hav-
ing sex! Librarians cannot hope to win this is-
ssue if they anwysely continue to support ALA’s
misguided, wrong-headed and error-filled ap-
proach.

The sad fact of the matter is this: If we do
not make the case that hardcore pornography
can be filtered defensively, then others will
make the logical deduction that nothing can. Hux-
ley once said that the true intellectual is one
who finds something other than sex to be inter-
rest in. The serious fact of the matter is the anti-
filtering position held by ALA may result in the
loss of librarians’ public voice, not to mention
our public standing, and, most importantly, our
public.

Leaving the Books Behind!
The Alter Ego

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Wow! Can’t believe it is a new year, 2005.
Late last year after the course work was com-
pleted, I reverted to my alter ego of writer for
my grandchildren. But you didn’t know I have
teen of those wonderful relatives related to
me. Truly a gift, but rough at Christmas. My
gift to them is a booklet each year of children’s
stories revolving around my childhood and that
of my deceased husband who is their blood kin
They are full of the mysteries of growing up in
the 50’s, but also filled with morals and family
relationships that seem to be lacking today. We
all have such a fun time with them and it is good
for me to remember the “rules of living” my
parents have given. The have also begun on
write some adult novellas that are full of rela-
tionships and wisdom learned through my grow-
ing years. It is a way to leave my history be-
hind. The oral tradition has come to almost a
complete stop in the world, as we relish tech-
nology, speed, separation and “throw-away” life.
We have forgotten where we come from or even
where we are going. Libraries are starting to
renew our interests in family with programs on
lineage studies, genealogy research and an occa-
sional program visitation with older folks in
the community who remember certain cele-
bated times (e.g., World War I or II, the Roaring
20’s, Roosevelt, or the Civil War). Every chance
I get, I am encouraging new writers to pursue penning their memoirs, or doing stories
or poetry around their youthful memories. I also
try to encourage Public Libraries to add pro-
grams of local history from the folklore of the
older residents. Why not? We need to learn
from the past and move in positive directions.

My coursework sometimes shadows the plea-
sure writing, but I can always find time even
through the two jobs, MLIS work and helping
a needy family all year long. We find time for
the important things in life. My recent work in
the Special Collections at USC Libraries has
led me to a new interest in writing. I have been
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Against the Grain / February 2005
In celebration of the “Year of the University Press,” a year-long campaign of the Association of American University Presses (AAUP) and the Association of Research Libraries (ARL), the University of Tennessee Libraries and the University of Tennessee Press co-sponsored a two-day public symposium September 23-24, 2005, at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville.

“The Book & the Scholar,” held in John C. Hodges Library, was designed to emphasize the relevance of the university press to the academic community and to focus attention on its importance in faculty publishing and scholarly communication. Barbara Dewey, Dean of the University of Tennessee Libraries, and Jennifer Siler, Director of the University of Tennessee Press, welcomed attendees, who included University of Tennessee faculty, staff, and students, UT Press personnel, and other interested persons from the book and publishing world and from the community.

Day one of the symposium focused on the relationship between university presses and universities. Bob Levy, Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs, served as moderator. Loren Crabtree, Chancellor of the University of Tennessee-Knoxville, introduced the keynote speakers and stressed the importance of scholarly communication and scholarly publishing, stating, “University presses are critical to sharing scholarly information.” Crabtree, himself a scholar, said he couldn’t imagine the book going away.

Peter Givler, Executive Director of the American Association of University Presses, and Sandra Yee, Dean of Libraries at Wayne State University, addressed the importance of a university press, expectations of the university regarding the press, and strategies for ensuring the vitality of the press in a program on “The University Press on the Campus and in the Academic Community.”

Givler gave a historical overview of university presses, which were started in the United States around 1870-1875 to disseminate the work being done in university laboratories. In order to share the very specialized work they were doing, the universities subsidized their presses. According to Givler, there are approximately ninety to ninety-five university presses in the United States and Canada today. Total membership of the AAUP is 124, including associate members such as research institutions, scholarly societies, and museums. Characteristics of university presses are that they are nonprofit scholarly publishers, their imprint is under the control of some faculty or university body, an editorial board and peer review ensures the quality of their publications. The mission of university presses is to publish scholarship, with the decision to publish based on whether a work will make a significant contribution. University presses help knowledge advance, Givler said, and, despite tight finances and a small readership, are freed from the necessity of making publishing decisions based on purely financial reasons. They can publish on subjects with a limited market and often, by publishing books of regional interest, are the means of cementing a good relationship between the university and the local community.

Sandra Yee, Dean of Libraries at Wayne State University, talked about “The Value of a University Press in Academia.” University presses, she said, provide an opportunity for young scholars to share their knowledge. Other reasons she cited for the existence of university presses are to publish for small audiences of specialists interested in concentrated fields of research and to publish important authors from around the world in translation. Some university presses have created niches or specialty areas for which they are well known. Yee mentioned Africana Studies, Jewish Studies, Labor and Urban studies, and the Great Lakes of Michigan series as specialties of the Wayne State University Press. At Wayne State, the university press returned to the University Library system until 2001, when it was transferred to the Provost’s office. Among the issues affecting scholarly publishing that Yee highlighted are radical changes in higher education, declining budgets in academic libraries, the importance of faculty research and the dissemination of newly discovered or created knowledge, and the need to preserve scholarly work.

Saying that she sees university presses in transition, Yee cited modern innovations in scholarly communication such as institutional repositories, MIT’s CogNet collaboration, DSpace, Internet-first University Press, EScholarship at the University of California, BiblioVault, and Project MUSE, a joint university press and library project. Yee concluded