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Letters to the Editor

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From Your (traveling) Editor:

The February issue of ATG is late because I have been gone from home more than I have been here this year. Still, ATG’s staff has been working away to produce the fantastic issue that you are holding in your hand! We have a series of article snippets collected by our guest editor, Kirstin Steele, about special personal collections of materials, from rocks and tractors, to china and rabbits, to books on the Civil War and Nancy Drew. There’s an ATG Special Report from Barbara M. Coopcy and Ann M. Snowman entitled “ILL Purchase Express” which is about Penn State’s pilot project to convert interlibrary loans to rush order acquisition. We have a fascinating interview with Matthew Broccoli, the dean of the Dictionary of Literary Biography. As well as an interview with the new EBSCO CEO, Dixon Brooke. And John Riley has interviewed Gregory Desilet, self-published author of Our Faith in Evil. Maria Silva Kuhn is our profile encouraged for this issue and our Biz of Acq author. Check out her article “How to Select a Vendor for an Approval Plan: Through Friendship, Personality or an RFP?” on page 50.

Ramune Kubitelevs and all her ATG reporters attended the 2005 Charleston Conference and have submitted reports galore! So if you missed it, you can catch-up here, see pages 53-72. And there are plenty of reviews in this issue too, including Ellen Finnie Duranceau’s review of Ambient Findability: What We Find Changes Who We Become by Peter Morville. Anne Robichaux tells us about the Librarian of Basra, a true story from Iraq, about a very courageous chief librarian and Debbie Vaughn has brought us Phillip Powell’s reviews of battlegrounds and bridges. Of course, Tom Gilson has been hard at work providing us with many reviews of reference titles like: A To Zoo Subject Access to Children’s Picture Books, that you won’t want to miss.

Also, we have Cris Ferguson who tells us what in the WorldCat OCLC is up to, while Kristen DeVo is fills us in on podcasts and podcasting. And don’t miss Cynthia Hodgson’s standards article on the NISO Metadata Initiative. Plus there’s lots more.

Well, gotta run. I am heading off to Burbank, California. Sounds like a Raymond Chandler novel.

Cheers, Yr. Ed.

Letters to the Editor

Send letters to <kstrauch@comcast.net>, phone or fax 843-723-3536, or snail mail: Against the Grain, MSC 98, The Citadel, Charleston, SC 29409. You can also send a letter to the editor from the ATG Homepage at: http://www.against-the-grain.com.

Dear Editor:

Mark Herring (“OpEd: Giving Thanks” — ATG Dec/Jan 2006 issue) has a very different idea of gratitude than I do. His case for “gratitude” is built on comparing the US to other nations in order to prove a case of greatness on every front — freedoms, economy, power.

Gratitude, in my mind, is a quality of humble appreciation for gifts received, not a boastful and competitive pride; gratitude contains compassion for those struggling with less auspicious circumstances, and in its pure form is not compatible with an assertion of superiority. Thesaurus.com offers these words as synonyms of “gratitude:” appreciativeness, grace, honor, indebtedness, obligation, praise, recognition.” These words support a sense that gratitude is about feeling indebted, obligated, as a result of having received, not a feeling of winning when others are losing, or being right when others are wrong.

In place of the competitive nationalism that emerged when I read Herring’s piece, I’d like to quote Lloyd Stone, whose words for “This is My Song” have been put to music: “This is my home, the country where my heart is, here are my hopes, my dreams, my holy shrine; but other hearts in other lands are beating, with hopes and dreams as true and high as mine. My country’s skies are bluer than the ocean, and sunlight beams on clover leaf and pine; but other lands have sunlight too, and clover, and skies everywhere as blue as mine.” He closes by saying his is a “song of peace for their land and for mine.”

Our world needs unity, not divisive comparisons that purport to show US superiority under a guise of “gratitude.”

And aside from my personal disagreement with this OpEd piece, I’d like to see politics kept out of the pages of our professional literature, unless directly related to a professional topic (e.g., government policies related to open access etc.). The blatant support for particular political leaders and against a particular political party — without any professional context — is stated in this piece does not, I don’t think, belong in the pages of ATG or any other professional journal.

Ellen Duranceau (speaking for myself, employed in MIT Libraries) <ellendur@ecn.com>