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Books are Us

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State (http://www.state.com/) This daily news magazine, which was formerly owned by Microsoft, was recently purchased by The Washington Post Company. A recent article discussed the fact that only the first four volumes of a new translation of Proust's In Search of Lost Times have appeared in the United States due to the passage of the Sonny Bono Copyright Act.

Blogging for Yourself

The best thing about trying to blog regularly on a particular subject is that it offers the opportunity to learn about that subject. Cory Doctorow, science fiction writer and European Affairs Coordinator for the Electronic Frontier Foundation, says of editing his popular blog:

"...[O]perating "Boing Boing" has not only given me a central repository of all of the fruits of my labors in the information fields, but it also has increased the volume and quality of the yield. I know more, find more, and understand better than I ever have."

Through blogging about issues in scholarly communication, we have learned not only a good deal about scholarly publishing but also about copyright, institutional repositories, and digital information. The exercise has allowed us to gain a deeper understanding of many of the factors at play in the world of scholarly communications. Moreover, since our blog is a searchable database, the information we have posted is always available to us, ready to be retrieved when the need arises.

Access Statistics

Although word-of-mouth reaction to the blog has been overwhelmingly positive, we would like to have an idea of the number of people the blog reaches. Unfortunately, even though we read monthly statistical reports, this can be difficult. For the first few months, the number of requests made to our server nearly doubled monthly. Since March 2004, the number of requests has been consistent, averaging around 800 per month. So what does this tell us? As Jeffrey Goldberg explains in his somewhat overwrought "Why Web Usage Statistics are (Worse Than) Meaningless," no inference about the number or identity of people reading the site can be gleaned from these numbers.

What we can tell is that the majority of the requests being made are consistently coming from the Georgia State University domain.

Conclusion

In today's environment, it is not enough for acquisition librarians to manage the day-to-day business of acquisitions. The ever-increasing costs of library resources combined with current budgets have brought the process by which libraries acquire materials to the forefront. This new attention has created an atmosphere of change, and acquisitions librarians with their unique perspective can be a part of that change. Communication is the first step in any successful change process. Users must be educated and staff must be made aware. Here at the Georgia State University Library, the initial communication phase has taken the form of the "Issues in Scholarly Communications" blog.

Endnotes


Books Are Us

by Anne K. Robichaux (Professor Emerita, Medical University of South Carolina) <awkr7721@sc-online.net>

The back cover of The Librarian (Nation Books, Avalon Publishing, 2004, ISBN 1-56025-636-2) by award winning author Larry Beinhart poses the question: "How did nebbish university librarian David Goldberg end up hunted by Homeland Security and on Virginia's ten most wanted list for bestiality?" That didn't entice me to check the book out of our local library as much as the title and the thought this would be great for this column. But the book is entertaining, a thriller, and the descriptions of four librarian characters, including our action hero (not just "the keeper of the flame") did not disappoint.

One character, Elaina Whisthoven, is described as...
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scribed as a lover of books, who wanted to serve humanity, thus she became a librarian. She
wore large glasses and had large curls that were always clean." She "lived like a nun on her
meager starting salary" in a rented room. Thus we are introduced to the poorly paid angle, of-
ten paired with our profession. This same chapter goes on about the current political climate,
decreased budgets that impact library services, and a chancellor of the university who thinks
all volumes can be replaced "by a great cyber-library, one library for all, accessed from our
home and office PCs," cutting down on the need for almost all librarians. Sounds more like truth,
than fiction, actually. We learn this from our hero, David, as he is firing Elaina, feeling that
he's "broken some delicate flower, snapped its stalk, and crushed its petals."

Both Elaina and David end up working for Stowe, a wealthy, powerful, politically con-
ected man, who has a wonderful private library. Elaina starts there first because she's lost her
job, then David, who takes Elaina's place, when she realizes her life is in danger. Stowe
indicates there are "great secrets" in his library.

There is a wonderful description of libraries in general, describing them as "free places. They
are clean, dry places in a stormy world. They are full of ideas and information. With all of
that together, they tend to collect books and wackos and people who bring shopping carts
with them, filled with conspiracy theories, even a university library with restrictions on access
and with campus security. There are, after all, quite a few members of the faculty and student
body who have wandered off the deep end of the pier." Again, this sounds fairly realistic!

Another university librarian character is head
librarian Inga Lokshurg, who has a thick ac-
tent (she came to the US as an exchange stud-
ent from Norway nearly fifty years ago). She
is a "crone, judgmental, and, by librarian stan-
dards, fierce." She apparently had been quite a
beauty in her youth, her gray, brittle, and stiff
hair used to be "sunshine braided down her
back." We learn later that she has many rea-
sons to despise the rich man, Stowe, who has
feelings for her but also believes that she has
put a curse on him. Dowdy librarian, with be-
witching powers?

Our hero, David, informs us that "A
librarian's job is to preserve and disseminate
information." But he also sees himself as oth-
ers some times see him, as "one of the spinster
women," a "lowly librarian." Even so, David
attracts the eye of a flirtatious beauty, Niobe,
moved to one of Stowe's henchmen, who sees the
intelligent spy persona side of him. She asks
him to tell her about being a librarian. David
complies by comparing the profession with communism: "We're in the business of giving
away knowledge. For free. Come in, please
come, and take some knowledge for free, no,
no limit, keep going, gorge on it if you want,
no, it's not a trick... Librarians don't have a lot
of status and we don't make a lot of money...
so our ideals are important to us and the love
of books and the love of knowledge and the love
of truth and free information and letting people
discover things for themselves and... giving
poor people Internet access." Whereupon Niobe
softly replies "You're a good man."

David is depicted as mild mannered, com-
puter savvy (among other things, he uses a Palm
Pilot), crafty in using other's passwords and
addresses to access electronic information, a
thorough researcher, reputable, harmless, a man
who "lives for records and documents." Other
descriptions include David's desire to become
"a man of action, an encyclopedist, how much
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