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Adventures in Librarianship -- Librarian Pyschology

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Something to Think About — You Had to Be There!

Column Editor: **Mary E. (Tinker) Massey** (Serials Librarian, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Jack R. Hunt Library) <Mary.Massey@erau.edu>

I've been a participant, speaker and organizer in many conferences. It never ceases to amaze me how each and every one of them is so different, although you do the same things year after year. I have spent many years presenting keynotes and workshops, yet each one is very different. It is the people involved in a particular conference that redesigns reactions, changes conversations, influences your hearing, organizes your experiences and colors your future forever. Sitting next to someone who discovers who you are and wants to discuss your adventures in the field is humiliating and prideful, to say the least, but fun. "You" meeting one of your own idols face to face, brings a kind of excitement that you will long remember. Listening to a new idea or explanation that prods the cerebrum into instant cacophony, carries an extended remembrance for months and sometimes years. Having someone enlighten you or lighten your burdens on the spur of the moment, allows you to relax and enjoy a new relationship.

For me, meeting those faceless vendors across tables designed to weaken your budgets has always been an interesting and important event at the conference. Where else can you see reactions and nonverbal behavior. Now, I can return to work and know how something is being said in an email, because I



have learned who that person is. Negotiations become more relevant and perhaps a little more fun. Boy, if I had a scooter to move me through the crowds and baskets to hold the informational handouts and business cards, I could stay there forever (well...as long as the room is open). This year I carried information for one vendor to upgrade a proposal and messages from a colleague about her professional needs while she lay in a hospital. I stopped to purchase a copy of last year's proceedings, while down the hall, I was given a two-volume set of historical reference materials we were about to order. And, I was able to bring home information about new databases and other digital materials for my supervisor.

Sessions were stimulating this year. I attended my first "product" session and learned about some new microform reader/printers that I will propose to my Director. During that session, I was able to present some information to the attendees about how important our microforms are as primary and back-up sources. Some had not considered particular crises we had encountered and began to rethink the situation. We discussed how to interest patrons in using microforms and how to make it fun for them. They decided to re-examine their ways of working with patrons. Service is so important in libraries and we need to pay attention to our

methods as well as our formats. I also attended my first "Beastly Breakfast" and enjoyed mentoring a woman through the weeding process in her library. I am hoping to hear from her throughout the year to learn about her progress. Individual sessions were very stimulating and people were interested in helping others with their problems.

I guess the experience would not have been complete without walking down the street to view local art and artisans. I have always stuck to the main conference area in years past, but this time I wanted to get a flavor of the city as well. There is a kind of magic in most vacation style cities and Charleston is only different because it is surrounded by so much history. Even in my wanderings, I found locals who wanted to know why we were there and what we were doing. I took the chance to let them know and was rewarded by many of those people commending our help for them in their own libraries. They all hope that we never become "virtual," for they would miss the importance of the personal interactions. There appears to be a kind of emotion, passion and excitement that we exude during the process of answering questions. How many times have we felt inadequate or even unappreciated? Perhaps you should have taken my walk and listened as people spoke, then responded with the importance of information retrieval and dispersal. It is something very important to think about! 🌳

Adventures in Librarianship — Librarian Psychology

by **Ned Kraft** (Ralph J. Bunche Library, U.S. Department of State) <kraftno@state.gov>

In order to better understand ourselves and our colleagues the **Psychology Department of Deap University** has launched a new quarterly: *The Journal of Librarian Behavior*. The editors of *ATG* have always believed that there is no niche subject so small that it does not deserve its own journal, its own "place in the sun" if you will, and that such efforts should be supported by the broader academic community. To further that end, here are abstracts from the maiden issue of *JLB: Volume 1, #1*, January 1, 2005 (published December 1, 2007).

"*Tolerable Levels of Quietude*," by **Racey Cantor**, PhD.

Abstract: Librarians from all specialties were measured for tolerance of noise and the absence of noise. Using sensory deprivation tanks, coupled with audio input from the college cafeteria, researchers found surprisingly high tolerance to noise (as measured by eyelid twitching) among reference librarians and an even higher tolerance among acquisitions librarians. Cataloging librarians refused to take part in the study once they learned "cafeteria"

noise was to be used. Acquisitions Librarians actually showed measurable increases in salivation corresponding to bell-like clinking of cafeteria utensils and plates.

"*Fund Raising and Dread: Fear and Loathing in Academic Librarianship*," by **Simpson, Flanders**, et al.

Abstract: Researchers measured librarian fear responses (dermo-conductivity) to verbal commands to raise funds made by academic deans. As commands were issued, librarians who pushed the "schmooz" button were rewarded with peanuts, those who would not be punished with electric shocks (12v increasing to 24v). About 75% of librarians continually withstood the shocks without "schmoozing," while the resistance in 22.5% of test librarians broke down as shock levels neared 20v. The remaining 2.5% were observed to have an undue fondness for peanuts and were willing to "schmooze" without any punishment from the

dean. Academic leaders may want to consider including peanuts in any planned fund raising activity for their libraries.

"*Direct Mail Marketing and the Acquisitions Librarian*," by **Frantak Milkman**.

Abstract: **Milkman** and a team of undergraduates created a room simulating the acquisitions work environment: computer terminal with "dear librarian" emails arriving at 90 second intervals, phone calls every 30 minutes for product surveys, and walk-in "volunteers" asking for advice on claiming every 17 minutes. To that mix they added a mail chute dropping thick promotional packages aimed to strike the acquisitions librarian on the forehead at random intervals. The research team observed 28 librarians and found that most could ignore the direct mail promotions with surprising alacrity, hardly flinching. The subjects did not open a single package and suffered only slight bruising below the scalp line. 🌳

