Bet You Missed It -- Press Clippings -- In the News -- Selected by Your Crack Team of News Sleuths

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Press Clippings — In the News — Carefully Selected by Your Crack Staff of News Sleuths

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Column Editor's Note: Hey, are you reading this? Your esteemed column editor would like to know what you think! Zip off a quick email to <pmrose@buffalo.edu>. Does BYMI fill your needs? Do you have any suggestions for changes? I'm listening! — PR

CREATIONIST CENSORSHIP
by Pamela M. Rose (University at Buffalo)

The Grand Canyon Association, which manages the bookstore in the famous national park, is reviewing the appropriateness of selling a controversial book, The Grand Canyon: A Different View. The collection of creationist essays offended the American Geophysical Union, the American Institute of Biological Sciences, and six other earth sciences societies, who wrote to the superintendent of the park asking that sales be stopped.


COST CLOSURES
by Pamela M. Rose (University at Buffalo)

BioMedNet and ChemWeb are shutting down. One publishing consultant suggests the closures indicate that “users want to go straight to the source.” Elsevier, who purchased one of the first experiments in building an online medical community from VitrekTrace six years ago, found the ventures were getting too expensive. Perhaps fallout from pressure to lower subscription costs?


SHOP AND LEARN
by Pamela M. Rose (University at Buffalo)

Talk about competition! The American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI), phone survey results that gauge consumer contentment, reports that Net-surfing Americans are just as pleased with many government science and health Websites as they are with top online retailers such as eBay. The number one government site? MEDLINEplus!


GOOGLE EYES
by Diane Davis Luft
(SUNY Upstate Medical University)

In order to expand the reach of its search engine, Google will index and make available to Web surfers the full text of first chapters of selected books in an experimental partnership with publishers known as Google Print. Books retrieved in a Google search are identified by the prefix “Book Beta,” and may direct users to Amazon, Barnes & Noble, or Books-a-Million pages. The new service is similar to Amazon.com’s “Search Inside the Book” feature begun in October 2003. Google representatives claim that the beta version generates no revenue, but that may change as the company explores the possibilities of hosting electronic texts for publishers. Google executives have also conferred with university librarians about digitizing elements of library collections, but no further details are available at this time.


...AND SCHOLARS IN LOVE
by Sandra Beehler (Lewis & Clark College)

Time hails Amazon’s new Search Inside the Book feature as “probably the most useful tool for shoppers, scholars and bibliophiles ever invented” and highlights it as one of their Inventions of the Year in the Nov. 17, 2003 issue (p. 68). Enter a search term and you bring up a list of books in which that search term appears—you are then allowed to look at the page on which the term appears along with a few adjacent pages. Amazon digitally scanned 120,000 in print books to create this archive and intends to add to it as fast as it can get copyright permissions.


A FINE PASSION FOR PUNCTUATION
by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

“Eats, Shoots & Leaves” is a 209-page hardback published by tiny Profile Books which has gotten huge buzz in a Britain where many “remain punctilious about their punctuation.” The 1,000 members of the Queen’s English Society see proper use of colons, dashes and quotation marks as something of a last ditch battle against general sloth and creeping Americanisms that even have Homer Simpson’s “Doth” in the OED online.

Sales have soared over 200,00, an astonishing first for the 14 employees of Profile. Scott Pack, buying manager for Waterstone’s bookstore chain attributes it to the British being a pedantic race. But John Richardson, retired copy editor and chair of the Apostrophe Protection Society says he’s just fed up with “Four Season’s Nudist Resort” and “No Dog’s.”

AMAZONDRIA
by Sandra Beehler (Lewis & Clark College)

In 286 B.C. the city of Alexandria set out to build a library containing all existing books; in the twenty-first century A.D. Internet megols are attempting the same feat. “Respecting [a book’s] physical form while transcending its limits,” Amazon has embarked on a huge project that aims to make information in the physical book accessible to potential purchasers. Amazon founder Jeff Bezos sold publishers on digitization by convincing them that increased searchability will increase sales—and by offering digitized pages only as a search tool. Brewster Kahle—founder of the Internet Archive and the Million Book Project—wants to bring books into the Internet realm where most of the world’s students do their research, but, to avoid copyright hassles, concentrates on titles in the public domain, which can then be searched, downloaded, and copied. With the help of “print on demand” technology, both parties hope to use digitization as a means to make the entire body of human knowledge represented by books accessible to a wider public.


OPEN SOURCE SYNERGY
by Sandra Beehler (Lewis & Clark College)

The open source idea that began with software such as Linux is quickly spreading to other disciplines—and challenging the status quo in patent and copyright law. Proponents of open source argue that it is a highly effective and revolutionary method for innovation in all fields of human endeavor. True open source is a collaborative process—the collective result is greater than individual efforts alone could achieve. The Internet is open source’s great enabler; intellectual property is its nemesis. Citing projects from Wikipedia to PLOS Biology to Australia’s Cambria biotech project, the author proposes that property should be distributed rather than protected and that doing this would ultimately be of benefit to the companies that now fight hardest against it.


THE PLOT THICKENS
by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Press baron Conrad Black, late of Hollinger International, began with a clever strategy: buy the primary newspaper in an isolated market, cut costs and boost advertising. That worked so well he moved into prestige papers — London Telegraph, Chicago Sun-Times and all the majors of Canada. This provided him with a multi-mansioned lifestyle and a flashy journalist wife with scant of Manolo Blahniks.

Now he’s up against the ropes as Hollinger shareholders have learned that as CEO of Hollinger he sold off papers to companies controlled by himself. Most curious is the Mammoth Times which went for $1(!) beating out a $1.25 million competitive bid. And over a seven year period, Hollinger paid out $224 million in management and other fees to companies owned by Lord Black.

His spokesman says he’s confident the facts will show he acted in the best interest of the shareholders.


THE MERRY-GO-ROUND STARTS TO SLOW
by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Scientific journals had been pretty much the same since the birth of Lancet in 1823. Academe grew and “publish or perish” became a universal rule so the industry grew. Then Reed Elsevier bundled hundreds of titles into ScienceDirect and offered it online.

The price is steep and Reed’s science-medical revenues doubled to $2.33 billion to provide 40% of its operating profit. And annual subscription increases have run around 7% a year.

Universities saw their periodicals budgets eaten up and were able for the first time to count how seldom many of the journals were read. But to unbundle and make any savings they had to slash scads of journals.

But Reed titles are being cut as resistance builds. Along with this is the movement to use free online peer-reviewed journals. And a bill before Congress would remove copyright protection for publicly funded research.


Adventures in Librarianship — Dear Gabbey

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

Dear Gabbey,

I am a 15-year-old high school senior and boy, do I have a problem. My local public library carries a way cool skateboard mag called Crusader, so I go in every Saturday to check out the new issue. Well, there’s a girl who works there, kind of straightening the magazines, rolling carts around and stuff, and I think I’ve fallen in love with her.

The problem is she’s old, maybe twenty. But I can’t stop thinking about her, the way she chews her pencil, the way she holds her nose around the bug lady, how the florescent lights show off the green streak in her hair.

Gabbey, I’m just a crummy slacker kid. How do I get her to notice me?

Perplexed in Pennsauken

Dear Perp,

Oh, to be young again, prowling the library stacks in search of enlightenment and whatnot. Don’t be put off by the age difference. Your Madonna may have well-concealed maternal instincts. Or you might consider impressing her with your maturity. If you asked, let’s say, “Can you point me in the direction of your Salinger collection?” she might simply swoon. If you said, perhaps, “I noticed you’ve migrated from Dewey to LC” she’d be bowled over by your knowledge of library procedures. If that fails, Commander Salamander sells a lovely little Shakespeare nose ring. Might do the trick!

Dear Gabbey,

I’m a librarian at a large university in the Midwest. Over the past two years I’ve become addicted to BPIE surfing. I don’t know how it happened. At first I just logged in and searched by subject for new engineering titles. Then I was searching by author... any author at all, just for the continued on page 76