Dana Alessi Tribute

Editor

Follow this and additional works at: https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg

Part of the Library and Information Science Commons

Recommended Citation
Editor (2004) "Dana Alessi Tribute," Against the Grain: Vol. 16: Iss. 1, Article 39.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.5442

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.
provide strategy. JISC does not appear to have an official OA policy; a leading staff member told me last year:

**JISC actively supports a variety of models for improving scholarly communication, and open access is one of these. The open access model is an interesting model which (as you say) has a lot going for it and which needs support, but which offers an approach that is not yet proven. Serious investigation is required of issues surrounding the open access model, e.g., its long-term sustainability.**

In practice JISC is a little warmer towards OA. There are, of course, the well-known evangelists for OA on JISC committees such as Fred Friend, one of the signatories of the Budapest Open Access Initiative. For them OA is a moral duty. There are those for whom public access follows from the fact that the public pays. Perhaps more important but rarely expressed in public is the belief that there is no chance of funding increasing so there must be savings and OA will enable cheaper scholarly communication in the future. At an important meeting in November, in theory designed to convince scholars but not handicapped by the attendance of more than a handful plus a sprinkling of other outsiders (publishers), the theme was stated as follows:

The barriers of price and licensing restrictions are hindering access to the results of academic research worldwide, and the seminar will place UK initiatives in the context of international moves to create open access to published research.

This reads to me like how not why or whether and certainly all the speakers tread on the same line, with differences of emphasis. The Harnad group in particular pressed academic bureaucrats present to mandate archiving in institutional repositories. The Director of the

**Wellcome Trust** made clear that for him mandating only awaited education of those he funded. No timescale was, however, provided.

The trouble, however, in Europe as elsewhere is that, while the OA gains momentum, there is a growing undertow of concern over practicalities among all those concerned with scholarly communication including librarians.

**David Brown of the British Library** recently published in his capacity as editor of Scholarly Communications Report a couple of arguments against open access many of which will strike a chord outside the ranks of "traditional" publishers.

In an excellent article in the British magazine New Scientist, a Public Library of Science protagonist writes:

"Our real target is the society journals. Those are the journals we think should move in the direction of open access... If we, BioMedCentral and other open access journals attract the best articles and most of the articles, the other journals will have to come round because they won't get submissions any more."

But this is not how the officers and publishing staff of European learned societies see it. Few go into print but some, for example Dr. Peter Gregory of the Royal Society of Chemistry, put forward reasoned objections. It is not only staff like Gregory (clearly suspect to some as concerned with profit!), but in practice academics in general do not rush to publish in OA journals. **Harnad** frequently points out with only about five per cent of peer-reviewed journals now OA, that route to OA is a no-brainer. It will take too long. Therefore he urges the wholesale and compulsory creation of institutional repositories. Alas there is no greater enthusiasm among the academic community about filling these repositories than even peer reviewed papers. It is interesting that the excellent **Dspace** (the bell weather of the repository movement) opens its doors to MIT faculty but it is not articles in journals that the press forward to archive.

Whatever the rights and wrongs of OA, the advantages and the disadvantages, the costs and the savings, attempts at compulsion by those funding academic research will lead to some rather unpleasant situations (if mandating is to work) and will certainly leave many librarians in a situation where alliances will shift. The fight for the hearts and minds is only just beginning and it will be the scholars themselves who will decide.

---

**Endnotes**

7. Personal communication from Professor Peter Suber.

---

**Dana Alessi Tribute**

Column Editor: **Thomas W. Leonhardt** (Director, Scarborough-Phillips Library, St. Edward's University, 3001 South Congress Avenue, Austin, TX 78704-6489; Phone: 512-448-8470; Fax: 512-448-8737) <leonhardt@lib.stedwards.edu>

I was saddened to learn of Dana's most untimely death.

Years ago, when I was a young pup replying for Baker & Taylor in the Midwest, I remember hearing stories about Dana from my customers. Even then, she was beloved for her energy, integrity, and friendliness. When we finally met at a conference, I was flattered to learn she knew who I was and we spent quite a while swapping tales of the road and sharing our love of the Classics.

Over the years, our paths crossed often. Dana's unfailing good humor was a bright spot at countless exhibit halls and her insightful contributions to meetings we attended enriched all involved. I came to look forward to seeing her, grateful that our profession was blessed with her presence.

---

[continued on page 84]

**Against the Grain / February 2004**

<http://www.against-the-grain.com> 83
her smile. She had that remarkable gift for drawing people in and making each conversation feel important. She was one of the best and she will be missed.

— Forrest E. Link, MLS, Northeastern Regional Manager, Midwest Library Service

In 1979 I was the National Sales Manager of BNA, and was on a two week trip on the East Coast, when I received a call from Chris Von Hinkleley, who at the time was relinquishing his position as Sales Rep in our Mountain Plains Territory (the Dakotas thru Texas) and was moving inside as Customer Service Manager. He said to me he had a candidate to replace him. Her name was Dana Alessi, and she was the Acquisitions Librarian at the University of Houston, but had been offered a similar position at Rice University, and had until the following Thursday to decide, but.....that she was interested in changing careers and going commercial. Chris said I had one window of opportunity to interview her, but to do so I had to cut my two week trip short, and fly back to Portland, where he would arrange for Dana to fly in from Houston and meet me on Monday morning. I did so, and left Newport News, Virginia (my hometown) and where I had planned to spend the weekend with my 80 year old mother.

Anyway, I met Dana early Monday morning for breakfast at her hotel in Beaverton, OR, where she had flown from Houston the previous night. I liked her right away, and set up interviews for her with various people from Blackwell during the day. At the end of the day, after consulting with my boss, Max Ginehm, who was President of BNA (and who also recently died of cancer) I decided to offer her the job as Regional Sales Manager for the Mountain Plains territory, and did so while driving her to the airport for her evening flight back to Houston. So, she had two offers and two days to decide, Rice University or Blackwell’s. She called me the next day, with one question: Would she get a company car and how much travel did I expect. My answer was no to the car (because the territory was so large that she would fly everywhere, and rent cars), and 60% travel, and conferences. She called me back the next day (Wednesday) and said she would accept the offer if I included the car. I did not hesitate. I said to her, you win. She was the most successful hire I ever made. She doubled sales in her territory two years in a row. She earned more bonus money than her salary at the time, and some eight years later I promoted her to Division Sales Manager. She subsequently moved to Blackwood N.J. as Product Manager for Approvals, and then left for Baker and Taylor after 11 or so years with Blackwell.

We remained in contact, until she left Baker and Taylor and moved to Las Vegas. When I learned of her illness, I re-established contact and had many conversations with her until her death. She never gave up hope, and I thought she might make it. It was with great sadness that I learned of her death on November 26th, the day after my 65th birthday. She was one of kind, and will be missed by many friends.

— Don Satiskey, Retired

Dana Alessi became my mentor and friend during our days together at Blackwell North America in the late 1980’s. We first met at a Collection Development Institute on the campus of Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas in the spring of 1986. She was working for BNA and I was a Sales Representative for what was then Research Publications (now Primary Source media). Our companies sponsored the Institute, so we spent a bit of time together, and we shared in an episode that would create a lifetime bond between us. On the final evening of the Institute, we arranged for a dinner on barges that circle the riverwalk. There were five of these barges connected and they were all set up with tables, chairs, cloth napkins, etc. There was not enough room for everyone to participate, so Dana and I stayed on the sidelines and waited on shore. As the barges made the last turn around the corner we could see that something was wrong. The last barge was sinking from the rear so that the passengers had to walk themselves forward to keep from going into the water. Although no one got wet, all of the tables, food, dishes, and wine on the last boat ended up in the water. Now that time has passed, I can admit that Dana and I got a good laugh watching those folks scramble to stay dry while all of the tables were sliding into the drink. I believe I heard Dana lament that they could have at least saved the wine.

It was not long after this that I joined BNA and worked with Dana. She was kind enough to share her extensive knowledge of the library industry and was always accessible. We traveled quite a bit together and had an agreement — she would teach me how to write an approval profile and I would carry her luggage. I think that Dana would agree we both got what we wanted.

— Steve Sutton, Regional Manager, Northeast Collection Management & Development Group, YBP Library Services

My favorite Dana Alessi memory features an abandoned black and white kitten she and a colleague rescued from a San Antonio Holiday Inn parking lot during ALA Midwinter. While Dana was able to host the young "tuxedo" cat during the meeting, time came when she needed to move on. I was the recipient of an Alessi sales pitch I couldn't refuse and thus ended up with a new feline companion named Rosalinda Blackwell, or Rosa for short, who shared my home for many years. Dana did so much more than a salesperson in my professional life and I assume that all who knew and worked with her feel much the same. She was an enormous positive influence on me as a collection development librarian, especially during my early years at Trinity University. I value her as a colleague, mentor, and friend.

— Craig S. Likness, Head, Archives & Special Collections, Otto G. Richter Library, University of Miami

Dana was a person who was a real Mensch. On my last visit to Charleston (when I was no longer affiliated with important publishing houses) but visited on my own for sentimental reasons, Dana was the only person from the industry who invited me to have lunch with her during my stay. It meant a lot to me and I never forgot that. I met Dana while she worked for Blackwell's with my colleague at Pergamon Otto Rapp and Dana left a wonderful impression. Later at Baker and Taylor she became my friend and we shared many good times and good laughs.

Dana was my supervisor at Baker & Taylor from 1996-1999. She was The Best Boss! Coming from book publishing, I was overwhelmed with the amount of information I needed to absorb when I first joined B&T as a field sales rep. During many conversations, Dana explained in detail the interactions of librarians, publishers, and vendors. As a former librarian, and a manager at both Blackwell and B&T, Dana was extremely knowledgeable about the book world. She knew library procedures, what rival vendors were doing, plus she knew many people in the book world. She was a mentor to many of us.

— Inge Valentine

continued on page 85
My favorite memory of Dana:
Dana was a big fan of competitive ice skating and enjoyed attending skating performances. During a visit to academic libraries in Hartford, we sneaked into a figure skating practice for a performance the next day. We stumbled around in the dark outside of the skating rink until we found an unlocked door. Instead of hiding in the back, Dana insisted that we go down front—and sit just a few rows from the ice. She sat us down among the Russian skaters, most of whom she greeted by name. No one questioned our being there. I guess people thought that we were part of the Russian coaching staff. We had the best time watching the practice, learning to coach instructions, and watching how quickly the skaters followed them. It was striking how hard everyone worked. Dana loved being there, and I loved being there with her.

I miss Dana—and will always remember her with affection and respect.
— Sharon O'Connell

I knew and worked with Dana over many years as she worked with first with Blackwell North America and later with Baker and Taylor. While I have many memories of various times with Dana, I think that one in particular stands out in my mind as a truly amazing occurrence.

While I don't remember the year, it was springtime in the Great Smokies National Park, probably late April. My wife and daughter and I were visiting the Smokies to see the blooming wild flowers as we tried to do often. It was mid morning and the mountain mist was beginning to lift as we were visiting one of our favorite spots on a nature trail. This trail was easily accessible by automobile. Visitors were able to park and then take a short hike to mountain cabins or other destinations.

Dana Alessi was a wonderful library professional. She was very bright, possessed style and imagination, and was just a quality person generally.

I met her in the late 1970s, maybe at that joint SELA/SWLA conference in New Orleans in the fall of 1978 when she had just signed on with Blackwell North America. Later, early in 1981, she recruited me for Trinity's collection development position when they were seeking to build the collection fast and well at the same time. I wasn't familiar with the institution, but she clued me in, and I'll always be grateful to her for that.

As I'm sure all your correspondents are saying, she'll be greatly missed. It's true.
— Richard Werking, U.S. Naval Academy

WEBWORTHY

Column Editor: Pamela M. Rose, M.L.S. (Web Services & Library Promotion Coordinator, Health Sciences Library, University at Buffalo; Phone: 716-829-3900 x129; Fax: 716-829-2211) <pmrose@buffalo.edu> wings.buffalo.edu/~pmrose

Webworthy has reviewed 317 Websites to date! Are you reading this intro? If so, we'd like to know if you find this column useful! Email the editor at <pmrose@buffalo.edu> with your comments and any suggestions for improvement! Websites are chosen for uniqueness, depth of information, functionality and ease of access. Sites are organized by broad subject area and are visited just prior to publication. Please let the editor know of any broken links. Communis and suggestions welcome to Pamela M. Rose, Health Sciences Library, University at Buffalo, 3435 Main St., Buffalo, NY 14214-3002; 716-829-3900 x129; <pmrose@buffalo.edu>. Unless otherwise noted in square brackets following the description, Internet addresses were reviewed in Science's NetWatch column. — PR

Biology
Ever want to get your hands on an electron microscope? Virtual Classroom Biology from the University of Nijmegen in the Netherlands features an interactive, virtual scanning electron microscope with explanations and applications in research. The site also boasts a gallery of 500 printable and searchable images with several movies and animations of microscopic specimens, Web lessons and slide shows for use in the classroom (some of which use the interactive electron microscope), and an "amusing informative film" that follows Annemiek along a program of study in biology at the University. Nifty! — http://www.vcbs.scic.kun.nl/eng

Mythology
Can't find your copy of Edith Hamilton's Mythology? Curious about chimeras or Calisto? Wondering about Norse mythology or Latvian folklore? If that's the case, take a look at Encyclopedia Mythica. This well-organized Website has been going strong since 1995. Boasting over 6,100 definitions, the site has sections for mythology, folklore, folktales, heroes, images, and even genealogical tables. Its coverage is global. This resource is easy-to-use, search, and browse. Most entries include pronunciation guides, etymologies, and images. [Michelle L. Zafra, University at Buffalo] — http://www.pantheon.org

Digital Collections
Forging a piece of the digital future, the Amadeo Group offers links to free medical information targeted mainly to physicians and health care professionals, but available to anyone with an interest. Registration is required, but once registered and profiled in your subject area, benefits include a weekly update of your personal page with literature abstracts and overviews of new publications, plus access to freemedicaljournals.com, and freebooks4doctors.com. The freebooks site in particular contains titles such as the full-text of HIV Medicine 2003, SARS Reference 3rd ed., and Cancer Medicine 5th ed. If you're a practicing health care professional, you may choose to add your publications to the site, and after one year become eligible for listing on MedicineOnEarth.com. All in all, an intriguing combination of options. — http://www.amadeo.com/