2013

Charleston Conference 2013-Issues in Book and Serial Acquisition

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Pelikan’s Antidisambiguation — Catching Up…

Column Editor: Michael P. Pelikan (Penn State) <mpp10@psu.edu>

A new year has begun, and with it, my return to Against The Grain, following an absence beginning in October. This issue’s column began as “catching up…,”— observations collected over the period that didn’t make it into columns not produced during my absence. It has coalesced, however, into less of a laundry list and more of just a few pointed comments.

My absence was the result of fusion surgery to repair three vertebrae in my lumbar spine. The doctors did a marvelous job, horsing things to repair three vertebrae in my lumbar spine.

My absence was the result of fusion surgery to repair three vertebrae in my lumbar spine. The doctors did a marvelous job, horsing things to repair three vertebrae in my lumbar spine. Nevertheless, I underwent a sustained, strictly-enforced period of extreme rest and absolute caution — an extended period during which the governing rule was “No BLT” — that is, no bending, lifting, or twisting.

So, for several months I observed the world, in all honesty, from an even more bemused point of view than I normally do.

During this period I pulled out several reading projects that had been sitting in the “if I ever manage to get the time” category for seemingly forever. For one, I re-read Churchill’s history of the Second World War. I had read it once before, and that was in my twenties. I got a lot more out of it this time.

An aside: the impact of encountering Churchill’s writing once again was enormous! The man could use the language! Modern form seems laughably crude in comparison, especially after a period of immersion in Churchill’s information-dense, nuanced, meaty prose! And most astonishing of all: Churchill, it seems, managed to write his monumental works on his own. That he could do this and keep up with his email, his tweets, his blog, and his writing is astonishing! (uh…..)

I also listened to music, watched some great movies, old and new, and revisited some favorite 1960s television. Basically, I consumed the output of others, in several media, and tried to keep from going mad from inactivity.

This, of course, provided the opportunity (read: excuse) to get my hands onto a new “best buddy,” in this case, a Kindle Fire HD, the 7-inch model. Yes, I parachuted myself right into Amazon’s ecosystem and handed myself over saying, “Alright, you guys can watch me reading and listening and watching — just keep the content coming and so easy to get at!” After these many weeks of heavy use the conclusion is inescapable: for the consumption of the works of others, and those works in several media, this is a near-perfect purpose-built solution.

That, among the six weeks post-op, it became time to start thinking about a gradual, very cautious, very tentative return to activity. As I began to reach outward again, I quickly discovered that even my very light laptop was still far too much to handle. Just the act of lifting it from a bedside table provided an immediate lesson in the limits of comfortable leverage. So that brought up the matter of finding a more content-creation-oriented device than the 7-inch Amazon tablet.

After some casting about for a “business-suit-ed” tablet, I took the suggestion of a co-worker and checked out the new Google Nexus 10.