June 1992

Off the Wall/ Publishers

Katina Strauch
Against the Grain

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

Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Strauch, Katina (1992) "Off the Wall/ Publishers," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 4: Iss. 3, Article 29.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.1243>

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.

We Shoot Publishers, Don't We?

Lo the poor publisher! We all love to hate them.

As a fiction writer, I'm furious and hurt when publishers reject a manuscript I've sweated and bled to produce. One of my favorite books is *Rotten Rejections*, edited by Andre Bernard published by Pushcart Press in 1990 in hardcopy and in paperback by Penguin. It contains hilarious rejections of the works of later famous authors by editors who were proved wrong. Here's one of my favorites — a rejection of "Portrait d'une Femme" by Ezra Pound: "The opening line contains too many 'r's.'"

As an acquisitions librarian, I'm constantly frustrated with trying to buy books direct from publishers. You want a book, call to get it, run smack up against the customer service rep. You feel like you're being taunted by a school bully. "Nyah, nyah, nyah. I've got the book. You want it. Get it from me if you can."

But, anyway, I want to say that, screaming and yelling at publishers notwithstanding, I do LIKE and even APPRECIATE some of the things that they do.

The first thing I like about publishers is that they take risks. I can't help but recall a quote that I read somewhere and I'm sorry that I can't attribute it, but this person said that publishers do the ultimate market research. They put something out there and see if it will sell. It costs money to edit, print, distribute and market books. I'm sure that many a publisher has taken many a bath on more than one mistake. Still, we authors and librarians owe a lot to publishers. What would we be doing without them?

I like publishers' 800 numbers (when they aren't busy). The 800 number is a great invention for those of us who have to account to the powers that be for every phone call.

I like publishers' catalogs. The debate on Internet notwithstanding, it seems to me that a publishers' catalog is like its CV. It tells us something about the publisher. It can be used as a selection and verification tool. Sure, in this day and time we have

Books in Print and OCLC and RLIN, etc., etc. But none of these will take the place of a good publishers' catalog.

I like most of the people who work in publishing (except for some customer service reps). They are people after my own heart and I find myself admiring and respecting them.

I don't like telemarketing, but I can understand why it is done. My attention has been called to more than one thing because of a patient, non-obnoxious telemarketer or a publisher sales rep who called or came by to tell me about an important work. I know that Lyman Newlin will kill me, but that's the way it is. How about let's learn about the book from the telemarketer or sales rep, Lyman, and then place an order with a book jobber? Needless to say, if every publisher used telemarketing or sales reps, it would be horrible because we frazzled acquisitions/collection development/reference librarians just don't have the time to pay adequate attention to everything. Telemarketing and sales reps allow us to single out things from

the myriad of publisher blurbs we get, but if it's used too much, the techniques will become like publisher blurbs. And frequently (especially visits without appointments) can become obnoxious.

I don't like getting ten copies of the same color brochure in the mail. It seems wasteful. But I also know enough about mailing lists and maintaining them to know that having a pristine mailing list takes time and money. And, so, I am even sympathetic with duplicate publishers' blurbs.

I like getting sample copies of books and journals and sending them to people who might be interested in them. I guess I just like the yin and yang of the publishing process.

And most of all, I like the way scholarly publishers **market** their publications. It shows that the publisher is behind the product. Authors appreciate it. Librarians appreciate it. And patrons appreciate it.

Publishers. Let's keep them. ☛

You Gotta Go To School For That?

By Jerry Seay (Library School Guru)

Now that I've done the Library School thing, it's actually begun affecting my thinking and behavior, and I find myself seeing and thinking about things in strange new ways. Whenever I go to the dentist and see a pile of magazines in the waiting room I have an uncontrollable urge to sweep them up (in a gentle preservation like manner of course) and file them alphabetic by title in the nearest Princeton File. Hold me back! And I positively cringe when I see the haphazard way the magazines, paperbacks and tabloids are arranged at the grocery check-out counter. What a disaster! What would Dewey think?

What about those tabloids? How does one properly file those things anyway? "Big Foot eats Elvis in UFO

piloted by Jimmy Hoffa over Devil's Triangle." Does this go under QP for anatomy (Big Foot — see under toe, stubbing), HD for shoe industry (Elvis — see also shoes, blue suede / Hoffa, Jimmy — see also shoes, cement), QA for Geometry (Triangle, Devils — broader term: Bill and Ted's excellent triangle) or S for Stupid (see also — dumb, looney tunes, wacko and horse hockey). I suspect library science is still working on this one.

In the meantime all this library stuff is still sinking in — affecting my brain. I'm sure that it's only a matter of time before the physical characteristics manifest themselves. So, every day I cautiously feel the back of my head...looking for the first sign of that tell-tale hair bun. ☛