February 1994

You Gotta Go to School for That?

Jerry Seay
College of Charleston

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

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

Recommended Citation

Seay, Jerry (1994) "You Gotta Go to School for That?," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 6: Iss. 1, Article 40.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.1531>

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.

You Gotta Go to School for That?

Dances With Librarians

by Jerry Seay (College of Charleston)

Having recently attended the Charleston Conference on Issues in Book and Serial Acquisition (one of the more significant in library and publisher land) I find it necessary to talk in depth on conferences in general. Of course I'm referring to what we all remember the most about conferences... the food, the dancing, and the parties.

There were definitely some of the best munchies I've ever stuck a toothpick in. Problems did develop, however. Has this ever happened to you? You have a real bad case of the conference munchies so you pile your plate sky high with sandwiches, pickles, olives, and a bunch of that green stuff that always comes crammed into a piece of hollowed out bread (who gets to eat all that bread that used to be in that hole I want to know). Okay, so you grab your drink, your napkins and a couple of those spork things (one of those strange plastic fork and spoon combinations that does justice to neither) and with the world's greatest balancing act you pray that nobody else bumps into you while you slowly, carefully make your way to the break out room. Of course, everybody else around you is doing the same thing so there is this weird slow motion ballet going on with people with their hands full trying to avoid slamming into each other and keeping their food and drink intact. Now you make it miraculously to the table and safely land your munchy supply with a minimum of spillage. You then discover you have another problem. This one involves tact. How does one put a sky high sandwich into one's mouth and chew and still maintain a degree of professional grace and dignity? One does not.

Many people never get around this obstacle and after finding that the little plastic knife they have been issued to cut their sandwich into tactfully digestible pieces is carefully designed to break in half upon use, they give up trying. They end up eating around the sandwich periphery and satiating their hunger with the olives and pickles and potato chips. Of course, if the seminar speaker has begun talking, such crunchy foods as potato chips are pretty much a no-no and the hapless eater is left nearly starving throughout the seminar. When it comes to the music and dancing, the accompa-

nying food can be as loud as one can stand. This is because no one is watching you eat. Everyone is watching everyone else dance and flail about.

Dancing in public is a peculiar thing enough, but when it involves publishers and librarians in the same room it takes on entirely new dimensions. I have always advocated working against stereotype and dancing librarians is truly cutting edge. Publishers, of course, are worldly business types who work hard and party hard. They are known for their ability to "get down and boogie" since that is what they do to work off stress after that hard day of big deals and publishing stuff. The wiggling gyrations of modern dancing can not truly be appreciated, however, until it is observed as done by the modern professional librarian. Since librarians are not known for their dancing prowess it is sometimes a shock to see them enter the dance floor at all. The notion of librarian stiffness and aloofness is soon dispelled, however, when the music starts and feet, arms and elbows begin to fly about the room. All pretense of high culture and fine breeding go out the window. They

wiggle, they fling themselves about, they jump up and down, they tap their feet and they waggle their heads back and forth. And all the while they are talking excitedly and loudly and spilling drinks on each other. While it is true that librarians as a group do not possess the smoothly timed moves of publishers, the wild abandon and sheer energy with which these librarians approach partying far out weighs any such lack of finesse. But, who needs finesse at a conference? Don't you just love this networking stuff!

This library job is getting more interesting all the time. The next time I tell folks I'm a librarian and they grin and ask me how many books have I checked out or how many people I have shushed, I think I'll nod slowly and answer solemnly, "It is the way of my people. You would not understand."

"Who do you think you are?" they will say.

I will bring myself up to my full professional height (5' 7.5"), look them straight in the eye, and reply simply, "I am called Dances with Librarians." ☛

Call For Ideas/Speakers, Etc.

The 1994 (14th) Charleston Conference

Issues in Book and Serial Acquisition: The Savage Marketplace

November 3-5, 1994

Charleston, SC

The 1994 Charleston Conference will deal with issues regarding acquisitions, collection development and technical services, scholarly publishing and selection of print, electronic and other materials, vending of materials, standards, and issues which impact the world of publishing, vending and acquiring and accessing materials in the library environment. Many new features were instituted at the 1993 Charleston Conference including shorter hours, simulation rooms, and lively lunches. The 1994 Charleston Conference will carry on these traditions as well as some old ones and some new ones.

If you are interested in leading a discussion, acting as a moderator, or would like to make sure that we discuss a particular topic, please let us know. The Charleston Conference prides itself on creativity, innovation, flexibility and informality. If there is something you are interested in doing, please try it out on us. We'll probably like it...

Send ideas by **June 1, 1994** to: **Judy Webster**; Head, Acquisitions and Processing Team; University of Tennessee Library; 1015 Volunteer Blvd.; Knoxville, TN 37996-1000. Phone (615)974-4431; FAX(615)974-2708; Internet: Webster@UTKLIB.LIB.UTK.EDU ☛