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## Letter from Oklahoma

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# Letter from Oklahoma

**A Bird, Wisdom and What Else? A Librarian**

by **Tom Leonhardt** (University of Oklahoma) (Leonhardt@ardvark.uconn.edu)

**OF THE MAKING OF BOOKS THERE IS NO END**

Opening my Spring 1994 Catalog for the **Catholic University of America Press** I see that the layout, design, and content match the name and the front cover picture of a cleric of sorts, a monk perhaps, sitting on an undersized horse, the result of medieval perspective.

The design of the catalog is stark and monastic and matches the books listed inside. Skipping the theological and Irish offerings, I do find one interesting entry for a book by Henry Suso (c. 1300-1366) called **Wisdom's Watch Upon the Hours**.

"Essentially a dialogue between the author and Divine Wisdom, the **Watch** tells of Suso's service to and espousal of Wisdom, his 'most cruel bride,' with charm reminiscent of contemporary chivalric romance literature."

That's all. I couldn't resist peeking. I think I'll re-read **Der Zauberberg** and search for truth and enlightenment at Davos, the sanitarium cum monastery, trying to follow Herr Settembrini and Hans Castorp as they discuss and pass judgment on the world below them.

**Der Zauberberg** is a wonderful book and the German is beautiful. There is even some French in it when Hans Castorp dances with Frau Clawdia Chauchat and she mainly addresses him in her native tongue.

My French is not so good, no, so I find the **H.T. Lowe-Porter** translation and turn to the section where the French-German conversation takes place and find an French-English conversation. It is not that H.T. Lowe-Porter's French is lacking, it is just that the effect would have been lost had the French been translated. Trust me.

But I digress.

North of the Red River, in Oklahoma, and especially in central Oklahoma, it is customary to make Aggie jokes, some referring to Oklahoma State University but usually with Texas A&M in mind. So right off the bat (more about bats, white ash bats, later) I notice that the catalog says **Texas A&M University Press** Spring 1994 including **Rice University Press**, **Southern Methodist University Press**, **Texas Christian University Press**,

**Texas State Historical Association & University of North Texas Press**.

The first 19 pages belong to the Aggies so it isn't as if they don't have enough for a catalog of their own. It just struck me as potentially funny at first glance. But it wasn't.

The cover features a close-up of a cardinal. He appears to be wearing glasses and sporting a beard but it is just his natural plumage. He draws our attention to the first book, listed on page 3 and called simply, **Birds of Texas: A Field Guide**.

The book is due this month (April) and is probably worth buying at \$14.95 (or \$39.95 if you want a cloth binding). Perhaps I will take it with me when I drive to San Antonio to visit my parents or when I go down there for an ALA meeting. "Birders flock to Texas because it has the most diverse avifauna in North America north of Mexico. That enormous variety of birds is at home in Texas' rugged mountains, vast deserts, lush semi-tropical woodlands, prairies, bayous, cedar brakes, thorn forests — all of which make the western Gulf Coast one of the richest temperate migration corridors in the world."

On page 6 you can find out about an audio offering called **Sounds of Texas Birds**, Volume 2 by Robert and Karen Benson (boxed cassette \$10.95; compact disk \$16.95). Volume 1, **Favorite Texas Birds: Their Songs and Calls** is still in print (see p. 40).

And on pages 4 and 5, what better spring offerings than three books about baseball: **Baseball and the Pursuit of Innocence: A Fresh Look at the Old Ball Game** by Richard Skolnik; **Safe at Home: A Baseball Wife's Story** by Sharon Hargrove and Richard Hauer Costa; and **The Meaning of Nolan Ryan** by Nick Trujillo. Sharon Hargrove is the wife of former big leaguer Mike Hargrove. The Famous Chicken (a.k.a. Ted Giannoulas) says, "It has a unique perspective — not from the field — but from the grandstand where a major league wife and her husband actually become a team of their own." (And which stands were you sitting in Mrs. Garvey, Mrs. Boggs?)

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## BETTER LATE THAN NEVER

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**Librarianship: the Erosion of a Woman's Profession** by Roma M. Harris (Norwood, N.J.: Ablex Publishing, 1992).

Chances are, you have already read the book, but I have just discovered it. A friend recommended it and as it turns out, the book is not only thought-provoking (nurses and social workers would do well to read it, too), it has been helpful in the preparation of a couple of talks that I am giving soon.

The book may have been reviewed already and in scholarly fashion I am sure, but having read the book, I will skip any reviews. I liked it and think that Prof. Harris, of the School of Library and Information Science, University of Western Ontario in London, Canada, has done us all a favor by writing the book.

Sometimes a person can do someone a favor without that

person being aware. In this case, in order for the favor to be appreciated, we must read the book and act on it, either in our individual thinking or in our thinking as librarians.

I will oversimplify the book and tell you that it is about a profession that has been undervalued in status and monetary rewards. In an effort to correct those problems, librarians have moved further and further away from what it was that gave their work value (service to readers). In short, we librarians have sought to achieve status and financial reward by trying to convince ourselves and others that we are professionals, teachers, researchers, information specialists. **Michael Gorman** keeps reminding us that we are librarians but we don't want to hear what he has to say.

The END/Finis/Ende/That's all, Folks. ☞