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Issues in Vendor-Library Relations

Annoyed and Inconvenienced: A Better Response

Column Editors: **Judy Webster** (University of Tennessee) and
Barry Fast (Academic Book Center)

We all face daily annoyances in our jobs, and some of them go beyond the ordinary. The ordinary we can accept; it's part of our working life. But every now and then something happens, something so unfair or inconsiderate or just plain mean that we want to shout expletives that can't be printed in this family journal. But we think them, or mutter them under our breath, or lie awake later in the night wishing we had the guts or the presence of mind to put the situation right with just a beautifully zinging one liner, a dazzling array of the perfect words, strung together in just the right sequence to reduce our tormentor to insignificance. But we always seem to fail. In these situations, adrenaline pumping through our veins, rosy red anger rising into our face, the last thing we can do is to come up with the perfect response, the words so finely honed that our response turns shame into triumph.

Who better to consult for advice in these situations than the Bard himself; William Shakespeare. No one could turn a phrase like good old Willy. Fortunately, there is a handy little book called *Shakespeare's Insults* by Wayne F. Hill & Cynthia J. Ottchen (MainSail Press, 1993), and we have adopted it as our bible, our ultimate source for the ultimate retorts. You will recognize below some of what we all, vendors and librarians, must occasionally endure. Following each torture we give the Same Old Dumb Response (SODR) that we have all given, and then the New Improved Shakespearean Response (NISR). If you substitute NISR for SODR you will change your life, sleep better, lose weight, be kinder to your pets and/or children, and offer to take your mate to the movies.

LIBRARIAN:

Your library director informs you that due to a slight problem in accounting, the electricity bill for the library is surprisingly high. In order to keep the lights on, the book budget will have to be slashed. Please cancel all outstanding orders by next week and report back on how much you have been able to save as a contribution to the electricity bill.

SODR: But that will make me look so stupid to my vendors, force me to work at home all weekend, and as usual I get to make up for someone else's mistake. I'm sick of this (all this muttered later, after trying to explain this to staff and vendors).

- NISR: (1) Thou can'st on earth to make the earth my hell.
(Richard III)
(2) This mock of his hath turn'd his balls to gunstones. (Henry V)

VENDOR:

Two weeks ago you made an appointment with the librarian, and today you have driven 150 miles to the library, arriving on time despite too much traffic. You are informed that the librarian had obviously forgotten about your appointment because she worked reference the night before and won't be in until this afternoon.

SODR: Aw you gotta be kidding. I drove all this way for nothing. I'm never coming back here but I know of course I will and that really makes me mad (all this said aloud while driving 150 miles back to the next appointment, arriving two hours early).

- NISR: (1) There's no more faith in thee than in a stewed prune. (Henry IV, Pt.1)
(2) [You] confirmer of false reckonings (As You Like It)
(3) Four words is but foul wind, and foul wind is but foul breath, and foul breath is noisome; therefore I will depart unknissed. (Much Ado About Nothing)

LIBRARIAN:

Professor Paine walks into your office and stares at you while you try to end a phone conversation politely. "Where," he demands, "is the book I ordered two weeks ago? I could have gotten it four times already at the bookstore. This is just another example of how inefficient our library is, and I will make a point of discussing this at the next faculty meeting."

SODR: You idiot, you self-centered egotistical ivory towered jerk. Do you think yours is the only book we've ordered? Do you know how much effort we go to to get books quickly for you? If you would plan ahead, just once, life would be better for both of us (this runs through your brain at 3:00 a.m. repeatedly, punctuated by an occasional pounding of the pillow).

- NISR: (1) From th'extremest upward of thy head
To the descent and dust below thy foot,
A most toad-spotted traitor. (King Lear)
(2) [You are] false of heart, light of ear, bloody of hand;
hog in sloth, fox in stealth, wolf in greediness,
dog in madness, lion in prey. (King Lear)
(3) Hence,
Horrible villain, or I'll spurn thine eyes
Like balls before me; I'll unhair thy head,
Thou shalt be whipped with wire, and stewed in brine,
Smarting in lingering pickle. (Antony & Cleopatra)

VENDOR:

The phone rings. "You won't believe this," the librarian says. "Try me," you say. "It's the same wrong book again. Look, I know the title is identical, that the one we want is volume 6, part C, but you keep sending volume 6, part B. Can't your people read?" You apologize, promise it won't happen again, hang up and stare at the wall.

SODR: My office is only ten feet above the ground. If I jump

out the window I'll probably only break my legs. If I kill that employee who should be catching this error, I'll spend the rest of my life in jail.

- NISR: (1) Asses are made to bear, and so are you. (Taming of the Shrew)
 (2) Would the fountain of your mind were clear again, that I might water an ass at it. (Troilus and Cressida)
 (3) You smell this business with a sense as cold as is a dead man's nose. (The Winter's Tale)

LIBRARIAN:

It has been over an hour that he has sat in your office complaining. You have loads of work to do, can't really fix his problem, it's lunch time and you have to pee. He leaves. The phone rings. It's an overly friendly voice from a reference publisher telling you about their brand new CD product that is essential to your collection. You explain that you can't talk now, and besides, decisions about which CD products you buy are made by Collection Development not Acquisitions. He keeps talking anyway until you insist you must get off the phone.

SODR: Why do they do this? Why now, why during lunch time? If they sell almost exclusively to libraries how can they be so stupid to do telemarketing? It must work, but maybe it doesn't and they are just too dumb to notice (all this muttered as you rush to the bathroom).

- NISR: (1) Canker of a calm world and a long peace.
 (2) Sell when you can, you are not for all markets. (As You Like It)
 (3) Get you gone, you dwarf;
 You minimus, of hindering knot-grass made;
 You bead, you acorn. (A Midsummer Night's Dream)

VENDOR:

It costs \$450 to fly to the library, but it's worth it, a potentially big approval plan. You should really bring two other people from the office because they can get into the details of your program with the librarians. You buy three non-refundable tickets. The librarian calls to tell you that the meeting has been rescheduled for the following week.

SODR: #@%\$!!&*&!!!! (this is said aloud, after you have smiled and said, "no problem" to the librarian).

- NISR: (1) What's here? The portrait of a blinking idiot,
 Presenting me with a schedule! (Merchant of

Venice)

- (2) I shall live to knock thy brains out (Two Noble Kinsmen)
 (3) What, dost thou make us minstrels? If you make minstrels of us, look to hear nothing but discords. (Romeo and Juliet)
 (4) You stale ole mouse-eaten dry cheese! (Troilus & Cressida)

LIBRARIAN

A local group of concerned citizens forms a coalition of clergy, feminists, gay rights activists, ProChoice, ProLifers, African-Americans, Native Americans and Serbs. They demand that all books offensive to these groups be removed from your library. A group of Hasidic Jews demands that the library be closed on Saturdays. If you fail to accede to these demands, they will make sure your contract is not renewed.

SODR: You are at a loss for words. You stop sleeping and start overeating. You say something nasty when your cat rubs against your leg. You think of writing a letter to the newspaper, but are afraid your house will be bombed.

- NISR: (1) He hath never fed of the dainties that are bred in a book.
 He hath not eat paper, as it were; he hath not drunk ink;
 his intellect is not replenished; he is only an animal, only
 sensible in the duller parts. (Love's Labour's Lost)
 (2) Go the primrose way to th' everlasting bonfire! (Macbeth)

VENDOR:

Your exhibit booth is at the far end of the hall, near the snack bar. At lunch time the line for food stretches past your booth, blocking you from view. In the next booth an A/V dealer plays videos with dialog so loud no one can carry on a conversation. The exhibitor behind you demonstrates interactive CD featuring all sorts of buzzers and tweeters. Few people come to your booth because it is so unpleasant. The exhibits manager strolls by and asks if everything is OK.

SODR: "How can it be OK," you say, "with all this noise and the food line blocking my booth!" "Oh, I'm sorry," he says, "we'll try to do better next time." You can't think of a scathing response because your head is hurting from the buzzing and tweeting.

- NISR: (1) I will not excuse you, you shall not be excused, excuses
 shall not be admitted, there is no excuse shall serve, you
 shall not be excused. (Henry IV, Pt.2)
 (2) I durst not laugh, for fear of opening my lips and receiving the bad air from your stinking breath. (Julius Caesar)

To make sure that you are never at a loss for words, and to raise the general level of your retorts, memorize these Shakespearean insults. Now! 🍷