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Letters to the Editor

Katina Strauch
Against the Grain

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Letters to the Editor

Send letters to <strauchk@cofc.edu>, phone or fax 803-723-3536, or snail mail: *Against the Grain*, 171 Moultrie Street, Citadel Station, Charleston, SC 29409. You can also send a letter to the editor from the *ATG* Homepage at <<http://www.against-the-grain.com>>. So now you don't have any excuses to put it off!

Dear Editor:

I just got my issue of the June [1996, v.8#3] *Against the Grain*. I always enjoy reading this from cover-to-cover.

Best wishes,

Melissa Cain
(UNC School of Information
and Library Science)
<cain.ils@mhs.unc.edu>

Dear Editor:

ATG looks marvelous. Congratulations. I just emailed **Tony Ferguson** and told him that we are willing to try his new proposed fiscal relationship [*ATG*, June 1996, v.8#3, p.94] if the librarians will be supportive of it. Interesting concept and I agree with it in principle, but I think the predators will win out every time anyway. Still I'm willing to try new approaches so let's see what can be done.

With the success of *ATG*, I hope you're still writing novels!

Sincerely,

Mary Ann Liebert
(President, Mary Ann Liebert
Publishers)
<MALiebert@aol.com>

Ed note: I suppose we will be hearing more from Tony on this issue ... Oh, and yes, I write fiction. No, I will never give it up. No, I haven't been published in several years. Victim of the "mid list" author death? Over my dead body ... — KS

Dear Editor:

I was interested to read Tony Ferguson's proposals and discussion in the *Against the Grain* "Back Talk" column (June, 1994) [*ATG*, v.8#3, p.94] regarding journals' circulation and prices.

His "Mutual Suicide" arithmetic accurately represents the state of affairs since 1970 or so, based on price and circulation figures available to me. The unfortunate aspect of this is that journals that attract increasing numbers of papers (in fields like AIDS, organometallics, etc.) are branded "predatory" even through their increased supply is essential to and reflective of increased research. The *Physical Review* now



delivers around 80,000 pages in multiple sections, the result of steady increases: 6,800 pages in 1959, 25,800 in 1969, 44,000 in 1987. Naturally, the price must rise even if researchers pay considerable production subsidies for each article.

The true predator lurks in Columbia's budget process, killing off financial support for the library as shown in the Mellon report released in 1993. Association of Research Libraries could update these figures each year, but they don't. Until the light of day illuminates this *bête noire* for the entire research community and is dealt with, the decimation of library collections will continue.

Most publishers can abandon publication of research and move on to trade and professional markets. Columbia University can sell its hospital, drop out of research, and survive as a liberal arts school. It is researchers and their underwriters who suffer from impoverished collection development programs.

So the "suicide" metaphor should apply to researchers' organizations like American Physical Society which have input to the formulation of national policy. They are aware of the problem. They could remedy it. They have chosen privately, however, to blind their members and the nation to this issue. They have chosen a fate which will be long and painful. Maybe they should be permitted a dignified, private death as Dr. Kevorkian has advocated.

Sincerely

Al Henderson
(Editor, *Publishing Research Quarterly*)
<70244.1532@compuserve.com>

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