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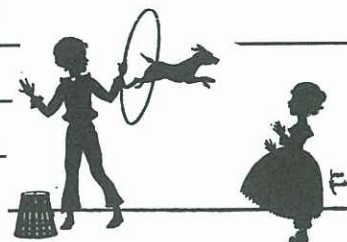
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You Gotta Go to School for That?

Hours into Minutes

by Jerry Seay (College of Charleston) <seayt@cofc.edu>



During my recent 10 year "purging of the files" (an event not unlike the "running of the bulls" but with much less goring), I came across a copy of the minutes of a business meeting I was obliged to record in 1993. The thing about business meeting minutes is that they are universally dry, boring, and hardly ever capture the true spirit of the meeting which they are supposed to record. That is why no one really wants to be the minute taker in a meeting. It is dull.

As it happened, I was elected to the secretary/ treasurer of the local SOLINET user's group. How I came to this august elected office I do not quite recall, except to say that I'm sure my campaign promises were probably vastly exaggerated and, hopefully, unfulfilled. In actuality I believe I was "volunteered" as the new kid on the block. In any case, one of my duties was to take the minutes of our annual meeting, which, as it turned out, was our only meeting that year. I, being the breaker of tradition that I was born to be (I can't help it, please understand), was determined the minutes of this meeting would not be boring. I would capture the truly exciting banter of our spirited business encounter.

Unfortunately, as I jotted down notes during the meeting, I came to the realization that has struck minutes takers since the stone tablet: meeting minutes are boring because, for the most part, business meetings are boring. Though our gathering did have its light and witty moments (librarians, after all, were involved), I was faced with an event that, if I stuck straight to the facts (as minutes are supposed to be), would certainly hold little interest to the casual reader. Dullsville.

Resolved that this must not be, I remembered what every good writer knows: it is not the facts themselves that are interesting, it is how those facts are told. Therefore, I wrote my minutes of the meeting as I saw them, with only the slightest of exaggeration for poetic license. Below, then are the exact minutes I submitted for the South Carolina SOLINET users group meeting on December 1993.

"A meeting of the S.C. SOLINET User's Group was held on December 9, 1993 at 11:00am during SCLA's 1993 Annual Conference at the Omni Hotel, Charleston, South Carolina. Katie Bielsky, outgoing Chair, called the meeting to order and eventually the scuffling in the aisles abated, and the meeting began. Jerry Seay, outgoing Secretary/Treasurer, read the minutes of last year's meeting (dated October 21, 1992). Despite last minute calls from the back row that the minutes be sung to the tune of "Danny Boy," such action was not allowed, and the minutes were approved as submitted. The treasurer's report indicated that there was \$813.51 in the Group's account with no outstanding bills. It further indicated that despite allegations to the contrary, Katie Bielsky had, in fact, not invested group funds in junk bonds tied to Lithuanian investments in bungie jumping portfolios. A review of old business revealed that it was no one's business what business this business was. Thus, there was no old business. New business included an announcement by Ellen Crosby, Professor of Library Science at the University of South Carolina, that she would be sending students out to search OCLC terminals in libraries throughout South Carolina and Bosnia-Herzegovina. She said she would be writing scratch-n-sniff letters to inform the various library directors. Immediately the group broke out into discussions of the proper kind of stationary to use in such a situation and then quickly turned to discussing favorite cuisinart recipes. After several minutes of confused milling about, Katie Bielsky was able to bring the meeting back to order with a minimum of small arms fire. Other new business was the election of new officers for 1993-1994. Martha Felts was elected Chair and at once decided that she would like to be a sofa instead. Lisa Bodenheimer

was elected Vice-Chair and assumed the traditional title "Our Lady of the User Group." Alis Whit was not at this meeting, so she was elected Secretary/Treasurer for 1993-1994. A spokesperson for Alis indicated that, although she had no idea what she was getting into, Alis would be proud to assume these monetary duties until such time as she could stick some other poor unassuming soul with them. Martha Richardson of SOLINET then treated the hushed crowd to new and upcoming delights on SOLINET and then sang the SOLINET them song "We've Got You in our Net" to the tune of "I've Got You Under My Skin." After a thunderous standing ovation the meeting was adjourned. Respectfully submitted (as best I can remember), Jerry Seay, Sec/Treas for 1992-1993."

Though I believed my rendition of the minutes was spirited good reading, it is worthy to note that I was never again asked to be Secretary/Treasurer of the group, nor have I since been asked to record the minutes for this or any other business meeting. I guess the world is just not yet ready for witty minutes. Alas, I suppose some things must forever remain dry, boring, and uninspiring to be useful. Good thing librarians are not like that.

Hey! Another snicker from you publishers, and I'll thump you with my hair bun! 🍌

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