February 1997

Annual Report Introduction

Thomas W. Leonhardt
University of Oklahoma

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

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

Recommended Citation

Leonhardt, Thomas W. (1997) "Annual Report Introduction," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 9: Iss. 1, Article 9.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.1982>

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.

The Annual Report Issue

by **Tom Leonhardt** (University of Oklahoma) <tleonhardt@libsys2.lib.uoknor.edu>

Beginnings are difficult, but usually not fatal. This is a beginning within a well-established journal, *Against the Grain*. We thought that it would be helpful if each year we looked back at some of the events of the past year to recognize some worthy events, to note some trends, and to recapitulate the year in terms of our own interests and specialties, much as we would write an annual report for our library, department, or company. In this first effort at an *Annual Report*, for 1996, we have articles that report on various aspects of publishing, bookselling, subscriptions, pricing, and the digital era that we seem to be in.

The lead article by **Ron Chepesiuk** is an interview with John Perry Barlow, the 47-year old Grateful Dead lyricist who has become one of the most outspoken and interesting thinkers on the subject of the emerging Information Age. The articles by **Clifford Lynch** and **Corrie Marsh** echo many of Barlow's observations, without the benefit of having seen or heard them, so certain thinking may be converging in ways that portend a brighter future for libraries and their partners than many doomsayers have been projecting. Barlow offers some commonsense and human observations about the Internet, books, libraries, technology, and cyberspace without resorting to the psychobabble that he referred to in his interview. His main point, however, is that something's going on and that we don't know what it is or where it will lead. "I honestly believe humanity is now in one of the great movements of discontinuity in history that is perhaps more profound and more earth shaking in terms of what it means to be human than anything since the capture of fire ... But I think to characterize this shift as a good or bad thing at this point is to trivialize its importance. That shift is coming, whether we like it or

not." **Clifford Lynch** tells us that, within this shift, we have a lot to learn but we have made progress. As always, Lynch eschews obfuscation. He translates complex ideas into clear, concise language and serves as living proof that you can be a techie and literate, too.

And now for something completely different. **Heather Miller** reminds us all that we are not alone when we feel more than a little overwhelmed at all that stuff out there. It never stops coming. If the book is dead, how come we are buying so many, even if we aren't buying enough? Choices, we don't need no stinkin' choices, we need a vacation and Heather tells us why.

The presidents of two booksellers, **John Secor** and **Dan Halloran**, give us their views about their competitive world and all the things (see Heather Miller) that librarians want them to do for them. Can you find the similarities, the differences? You don't need to be an acquisitions librarian to find much of value in these two essays, but if you are, wow! Just what do librarians want? We offer articles by **Lynne Branche Brown** and **Corrie Marsh** that should get you thinking so you can decide for yourself.

There are three articles on pricing (**Celia Wagner**, **Fred Lynden**, and **Dan Tonkery**). Celia gives us some definitions. Fred gives us some figures. Both are experts on book prices but happily they each come at it in a different way. It was a very good year. **Dan Tonkery's** article is an opinion piece and looks to the future. Does the subscription services pricing model need to change? Will it? **Karen Hunter** suggests in her title that things go bump in the night when you work with serials.

It's a good thing that I don't plan as far ahead as tomorrow because the next three years, according to futurist **Kim Long**, are lame duck years. You'll have to read

his article to understand why. As for me, I will continue to make the most of tomorrow and won't be disappointed when the beginning of the millennium (2000 or 2001?) turns out to be an anticlimax.

When you look back to 1996 you might want to look at your reference collection, too, and compare it with the reference retrospective by **Tom Gilson**. How did I miss the publication of *The Encyclopedia of Beer* published by Holt for only \$35. Are there others that you might have missed? Read on.

This "Annual Report" is not without an international flavor. We have an interview with **Keith Schmiedl**, president of Coutts Library Service, an annual report on libraryland in the United Kingdom, by **Liz Chapman**, and a report on Scandinavian publishing by **Harald Joa** of the Scandinavian University Press. Thanks to Liz, I have another book on my "To Read" list, *Greek Rural Postmen and Their Cancellation Numbers*.

And finally, just when you thought you knew what fair use was or wasn't, (it takes a village of lawyers and judges to decide on copyright infringement), **Anne Klinefelter** writes about a decision that either clarifies or obfuscates the issue. Read this and prepare a copyshop course pack to suit yourself.

Please let us know what you think of this annual report issue and what you would like to see covered next year. And please consider writing an annual report yourself. Begin making notes now and the report will write itself. Just pretend that your boss requires it and your deadline is November 19, 1997. You can then begin the new year with a clear conscience and another blip on your resume.

Enjoy! 🐾

Rumors

from page 7

Journal (p. 82) reported a new suit by the Department of Justice, Robert Costa (former City Librarian, Richmond Public Library), and Ronald Thornburg (former sales rep, **Baker & Taylor**) that "alleges that B & T ... has overcharged public schools, libraries, and federal agencies \$100 million to \$200 million during the last decade." "These charges against Baker & Taylor are outrageous, and we are confident the courts will expose how the government and these so-called whistle blowers are seeking to distort our business practices for financial gain," said Jim Ulsamer, president of Baker and Taylor Books. "We will not allow these false allegations to affect our business or our relationship with America's libraries, which make up our largest group of customers. ... This is another instance in which a well-intentioned government statute ends up having an enormous negative impact on a business enterprise. Because of unfounded allegations by two individuals seeking to reap the rewards of a government bounty, we are forced to use the

courts to defend our business practices and protect a corporate reputation we have been building for the past 169 years."

I told you you better renew your subscription to *ATG* (have you? nag, nag, nag) because there were more rumors to come, if nothing else. Well — I just plain missed running this one last time and it's from one of my favorite people in the whole world, **Lynne Rienner** <lrc@csn.net> (even if she didn't come to the Charleston Conference this year), the woman with the publishing company that bears her name. Anyway — the **Three Continents Press** imprint is now part of the **Lynne Rienner publishing program**. These distinguished titles in fiction, poetry, and literary criticism — including works by Nobel Laureates Naquib Mahfouz, Derek Walcott, and Wole Soyinka — add an important humanities component to LRP's extensive list in the social sciences. Three Continents Press was established in 1973 by **Donald E. Herdeck**, a professor of comparative literature at **Georgetown University**. The acquisition of Three Continents continues the rapid expansion of Lynne Rienner Publishers which has doubled in size over the last two years.

continued on page 9