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Booklover: Concepts of a Con, the Chase and Chaos

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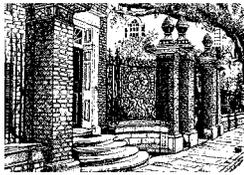
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Booklover — Concepts of a Con, the Chase and Chaos

Column Editor: **Donna Jacobs** (Research Specialist, Transgenic Mouse Core Facility, MUSC, Charleston, SC) <jacobsdf@musc.edu>

Three Nobelists. Three books. Three story lines. Three connections. One Subject. When **Katina** introduced this column, "**Booklover**," a few months ago, I'm not sure she knew exactly how fitting the title is for the column. I have always been a booklover. Books are tactile. Beginning with the feel of the cover on your palm, it can be smooth or rough. The book's weight is apparent in your hand as you read. The texture of the pages sensed by your fingers as you turn the page. Books are visual. The font immediately creates a relationship with the eye. Chapter headings define the author's story parts. An author's photograph on the back cover identifies the weaver of the words. Even small graphics announcing a change of character, pace or style create an accent or define your focus. Books are cerebral. They force you to wonder, wander, dream, lose yourself in the story, image the characters, laugh, cry, and grow goose bumps.

Books written by **Nobel** laureates are a recent personal passion. With the hope to find and read at least one book by every author who has won the **Nobel Prize** in Literature, I carry "The List," tattered and notated, tucked in my daytimer. When I find myself in a library, bookstore, book fair, or flea market, I search. Sometimes I find one. Sometimes I find several. These books intrigue me and reading them in the random coincidental way they are discovered allows for a somewhat unique connection of topics. Readers of fiction expect authors to weave tales of drama, intrigue, sci-fi, and romance, with characters rich in dimension. What happens when the book is about a book?

Three books about a book, four notebooks and a published novel, or the hope of an approval to pen a biography are connected by the concepts of a con, the chase and chaos. *The New Life* by **Orhan Pamuk**,

purchased new prior to his winning the **Nobel Prize** in 2006, creates a chaotic chase. **Doris Lessing's** *The Golden Notebook*, checked out of the **Charleston County Library**, choreographs chaos. While *The Paper Men* by **William Golding**, found on one of my regular book crusades to **Blue Bicycle Books**, describes the con with a little chase and chaos thrown in for devilish fun.

In 1997 **Orhan Pamuk** published *The New Life*. He begins with **Osman's** proclamation: "I read a book one day and my whole life changed. Even on the first page I was so affected by the book's intensity I felt my body sever itself and pull away from the chair where I sat reading the book that lay before me on the table. But even though I felt my body dissociating, my entire being remained so concertedly at the table that the book worked its influence not only on my soul but on every aspect of my identity. It was such a powerful influence that the light surging from the pages illumined my face; its incandescence dazzled my intellect but also endowed it with brilliant lucidity."

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Building Library Collections in the 21st Century — The New Organization Librarian

Column Editor: **Arlene Sievers-Hill** <axs23@case.edu> <arlenesievers7@hotmail.com>

A new political organization is being formed in Washington, DC, according to the will of the populace. A new economic order is coming into being through a series of financial cataclysms, like dominoes, each falling down upon the other. How these events will specifically affect the university library and public library, and the acquisitions and collection development activities within them is not at all clear. The economic side of things does not bode well for anyone for a while, whereas government policy may again favor education and research, most definitely scientific research. There will not be enough money to go around, and belt-tightening looms for us now. Staffing will freeze or be cut back. Most likely work for the library will not decrease, and whereas this economy may affect student loans, the lifeblood of many college students, credit for this purpose may actually loosen up through new government policy and even stimulus money. Public libraries will be swamped as they usually are in times of unemployment, but local and state funding may not be able to provide sufficient support for expanded services.

What does all this have to do with the library as an organization and the librarian within that organization? Some of the worst features of library management and management in general

in recent years have, in my opinion, arisen from ill conceived reorganizations and the adoption of principles taken from heavily promoted management books. Often the result from these sweeping reorganizations is plummeting staff morale, emphasis on process rather than product, endless meetings, and an eventual return to the status quo, with the books quietly taking their places on library office shelves. These library reorganizations usually arise during flush times when there is enough money and staffing to bring forth the changes without the essential activities of the library not be too adversely affected. Time will be wasted. I use the term organization rather than library because library vendors are also susceptible to these same wrong turns management programs.

Mind you, these efforts are usually meant to improve library and vendor functioning through a recognition that change is necessary for the library to survive as a central organization in a university, town, or a vendor as a major player. Unless the change, reorganization or simple changes are due to a real problem, deficiency, or dyed in the wool entrenchment, or unless they are really well-examined and enacted, no good will come of it. And when the changes are for change itself, or for the library to appear *au courant*



Booklover from page 65

These words are so intensely magical to this booklover that I read the beginning of this book on a regular basis. And I wonder what book (or books) so affected me by its (their) intensity or will in the future. Chasing the book through the twist and turns of its influence on **Osman's** new life keeps the reader on a page-turning edge.

In **Nora Ephron's** book *I Feel Bad About My Neck* she questions: "Does anyone read **Lessing's** *The Golden Notebook* anymore?" **Doris Lessing**, born in Persia in 1919, is self-educated and won the **Nobel Prize** in 2007. I am so intrigued with this comment that I go immediately to the library to check out **Lessing's** novel published in 1962. Many women read this book in the 60's believing it a "trumpet" for women's liberation. Yet, **Lessing** had another theme in mind: breaking down so one can heal. Her central character, **Anna Wulf**, has authored *Frontiers of War* and lives on the royalties. To calm the chaos in her mind she chronicles her thoughts in four

different colored notebooks. She is chasing her chaotic thoughts and finally synthesizes them in the golden notebook. **Lessing** wanted to write a book about the problems of an author. She uses the chaos created by the problem of writer's block "to break certain forms of consciousness and go beyond them." She even dealt with her own emerging contradictory beliefs and ideas. It seems her chaos became the book's.

Now to the con. At any point the opportunity exists to be profoundly affected by simple words woven to intrigue. The con created in 1984 by **Golding** in *The Paper Men*, a year after he won the **Nobel Prize**, is such an opportunity. **Wilfred Barclay**, an English author of renowned with a taste for the spirits is chased, stalked, and harassed by **Rick L. Tucker**, a young professor desiring to write **Barclay's** biography. **Golding** deliciously writes the chaotic chase to the con. One comment describes the end as "splendid" and I agree. This most unique ending places this novel in the must read category.

Have I conned you into a chase through the chaos of three books? 🐿

with its library peers it is even worse. During normal economic times reorganization reflects a library involved in the continuous improvement process. In an economic time like we are having and are heading towards, as inexorably as the planet is to global warming, in which non-profits are amongst the most vulnerable players, we need to be operating at top efficiency, and this requires strong leadership, a clear reporting structure, accountability, and high staff morale. High staff morale comes by showing regard for the work of all staff, and working towards retaining them through positive reinforcement. People don't mind working hard if they are treated fairly.

New ideas in the management of libraries and forms of reorganization are positive. The model of the flattened hierarchy and the formation of teams to perform all library functions are examples. Teams made up of those trained in the tasks and familiar with them, and those not at all, generally do not succeed. However, nearly every library I know now has interdisciplinary teams that deal with specific in-between areas and short term projects. They do succeed because participation from different areas of the organization are vital to the success of what are critical tasks. Projects such as a massive collection shift might take a shorter term group, and one concerning digital initiatives will be ongoing, because there are more projects all the time.

There are also those libraries and vendors where nothing ever changes and the strides in frequent adoption of superior automation and digital materials, databases, archives and the metadata to access them that are the norm elsewhere simply pass them by. This is even more dangerous for the organization than continual experimentation. It is suicidal because the library will be bypassed altogether in the university and the town, and the vendor in the marketplace and the conference exhibit hall. **Google Scholar** and **Google Books** make it clear that enacting important new technologies and communicating this to the university or public is essential. The style of management that confidently creates and embraces a plan that emphasizes basic competence, to the point of recognizing faults, and seeking collaborative help to correct them from our constituents, as well as a determination to be an early adapter of new technology is on the right track. Becoming the acknowledged leader in enhanced catalogs, advanced search engines, digital archives and metadata access programs and a force with which to be reckoned in the library grant receiving arena are examples of what good management wants to achieve, and needs to achieve to get and continue to get the financial support to do what they are doing.

The competence component and asking for help method can come from effective surveying

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