

June 1998

From Your (saddened) Editor

Katina Strauch

Against the Grain, kstrauch@comcast.net

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



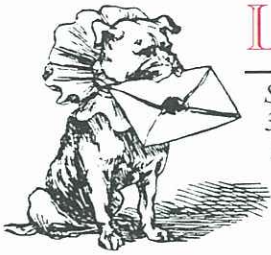
Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Strauch, Katina (1998) "From Your (saddened) Editor," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 10: Iss. 3, Article 4.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.2779>

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.



Letters to the Editor

Send letters to <strauchk@cofc.edu>, phone or fax 843-723-3536, or snail mail: **Against the Grain**, 209 Richardson Ave., MSC 98, The Citadel, Charleston, SC 29409. You can also send a letter to the editor from the **ATG Homepage** at <http://www.against-the-grain.com>

Dear Editor:

I want to correct an impression that **John Secor** conveyed in his **ATG** February '98 article entitled "**Pandora's Box — Partnering: A Powerful 'What to Do' Management Tool or Just Another Fad.**" John and I have had a friendly debate on the term "partnering" for years, both in an informal way and, in the January 1997 **ALA Conference**, in front of an audience of librarians. In fact, I am the "senior executive of a library bookselling company" he disparagingly refers to on page 72. I did give my views on the use of the word partnering, but not quite in the way John tells it.

I do understand what partnering means, in the context that John has popularized it. I share his thoughts on the business strategy embodied in the way he uses the word. I agree that relationships between vendors and librarians require a close collaboration because the environment is changing rapidly and the solutions are more complex than in the past. Without a close, collaborative and collegial customer/vendor relationship, we are impeding communication and accomplishing far less than is possible. Anyone who reads my writings in the **ATG** column, **Issues in Library/Vendor Relations**, knows how strongly I support this viewpoint.

But words have both a rational and emotional content. Words mean things, often precise things, and we should use them carefully. My only quarrel with John on the use of the word partnering is that I think it is imprecise. It is, in my view, a buzzword, and an inaccurate buzzword. When I hear the noun, partner, I think of my wife (the more emotional aspect of this word, as in partner in life) or my colleague, **Dan Halloran** (the more rational aspect of the word, as in busi-

ness partner). In both cases, the word implies equality and commitment. When cowboys used it, affectionately, in the old West-erns, that's what it meant, and it still does on cop dramas in the movies and TV. It especially bothers me when a perfectly good noun is turned into a cumbersome verb. I happily stand accused of being a curmudgeon on language abuse. I dislike the word partnering because it is a bad verb derived from a good noun to describe a business relationship that does not, and should not, exist.

When a library pays a vendor to supply certain products or services the relationship can be, and should be, collaborative, congenial, collegial, and as cordial as both parties want. But the relationship is not equal, and it should not be. The vendor works for the library, at the librarian's direction, to standards established by librarians. Consulting together on problem solving, or bringing new and creative ideas to the process, is all to the good. But no matter how intimate or collaborative this relationship gets, it is not a partnership. The librarians retain the right to dismiss the vendor, with or without a good explanation, with or without civility. By definition, the relationship between a customer and a supplier is commercial and unequal.

We can create a new word, if we wish, to define the collaborative customer/supplier relationship, but let's not take an old one, full of rational and emotional content, and change both its meaning and its gender.

That is the point I made at the ALA meeting, and it is still my position.

Sincerely,

Barry Fast

(Vice President, Academic Book Center,
800-326-3080) <barryf@abc.com>

See page 94 for more letters.

From your (saddened) Editor:

This morning when I was finishing up this issue of **Against the Grain**, I learned of the death of **Mario Casalini** — a truly gentle, marvelous, kind, generous, urbane and cultured man. I feel that I must break with the tradition of the **ATG** editor's column to reminisce.

Born in Florence 77 years ago, Mario Casalini was a genius who started an Italian book and journal business and won our hearts as well as our accounts. I first encountered Mr. Casalini over email. He was inquiring about the Charleston Conference. Larry Simms, an Italian Professor here at the College of Charleston, had learned that Mr. Casalini was coming to Charleston. He was elated. He knew Mr. Casalini well and described him as a scholar of deep learning and culture.

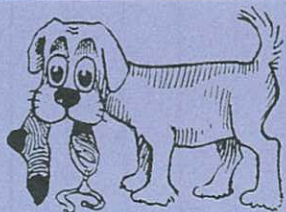


I met Mr. Casalini that same year. He was courteous and self-deprecating. He bowed and even (I believe) kissed my hand. I had never encountered such manners,

such grace, such gentlemanliness. I recently visited **Casalini Libri** in Italy and met **Barbara** and **Michele Casalini**, his daughter and son who have taken over the company. I feel honored that I got to visit Mr. Casalini in his native Fiesole, a gorgeous venue where he did business in a beautiful villa. He showed me the chapel where his parents had worshipped. It was full of boxes and supplies, but he said that he hoped to turn it back into a chapel someday. The last time I saw Mario Casalini was in Charleston at Blossom's Cafe, where he brought me 12 gorgeous red roses. He was always doing something nice. Always thinking of those around him and never of himself.

I will miss Mario Casalini very much. He was born so early in the twentieth century that his manners were those of the nineteenth. He conducted himself with a graciousness that is disappearing with his generation. May he rest in peace.

Yr. Ed. 



Against the Grain — Deadlines 1998 Volume 10

Event	Issue	Camera-Ready Copy
Reference Books	September 98	7/8/98
Charleston Conference	November 98	9/16/98
ALA Midwinter	December 98/January 99	11/18/98