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Papa Lyman Remembers — Words and Phrases and Frankfurt and Charleston

by Lyman Newlin (Book Trade Counsellor) <broadwater@commtech.net>

It's asking quite a bit from my cantankerous self when I no more return from the **Charleston Conference** with so many pleasant memories of friends to be brought back to the real world of tending to the business of an **ATG** deadline! In this column, I've decided to deal with some special words and phrases. Here goes!

I have to give a swift kick to a term which is beginning to wear on my nerves and will, I am certain, drive me into the Devil's hands if I don't exorcise it. It is the use of the word **OUTSOURCE** — **OUTSOURCED** — **OUTSOURCING**. I am sure that Will Safire or his ilk have taken or will take care of the semantics. Me, I just got all the semantical (if I may use the term) help I need from *The Oxford Desk Dictionary*. This is the complete citation: "Outsource: to acquire from vendors or foreign sources." What a letdown this straightforward statement should give to the thousands of speakers and writers who have been working the living bejabers out of the word! Think of it: for all these ages, we have been outsourcing when we bought a pair of shoes or a package of Wrigley's spearmint, to say nothing of buying library books from one of the dozens of dealers who have "vended" same. The mind goes berserk with new uses for this proper word for those misuses we have given to "buying; purchasing; ordering."

Now I must go outsource my lunch because I am going to cook it myself, but will acquire (it) from (a) vendor(s). I can hardly wait to see which of our vendor friends will be the first to cast aside their shabby, outdated "Approval Plan" for a jazzy new "Outsource Intendment." Referring again to *Webster's New International*, 2nd ed., — "Outsource" does not appear, but "intendment" does. I may not have used the word exactly as it should be used, but who cares? The perpetrator of outsourcing resorted to Madison Avenue methodology. Why can't I?

Far be it from me to commercially plug any Oxford book, but I have fallen for this little dictionary and must admit to loving it. When I was venting my spleen on the above word, I looked up another one which was giving me fits a few years ago: "serendipity." I even called **Kit Kennedy** who was given to its frequent usage during her tenure as **Coutts'** sales manager. Kit acknowledges a memory of that practice, but admits to its infrequent usage nowadays.

Although each of Ian Fleming's James Bond novels has sold in the millions in this country, Bond got off to a rocky start after his first book, Casino Royale, was first introduced in England in 1953 with a printing of 4,750 copies. Fleming's agent approached several American publishers, all of whom quickly turned Bond down. Doubleday returned the book with no comment ... Norton called it "Very English" ... Knopf turned it down because "its excesses outweigh its readability."

Oh yes: there's a new movement abroad now that is getting much support: DOI (Digital Object Identifier). It was the proper buzz word at the **Frankfurt International Book Fair** this past October. Although many large and important publishers, especially those who do scholarly books are behind the movement, there is a wall of opposition and I have noticed a wall of book people who intentionally confuse DOI with DOA. We shall see. In the meantime, there will be more on DOI in my comments upcoming in **ATG**, February, 1998.

While on the subject of Frankfurt, I was there, after a two-year absence. The addition of a couple of new, or different, buildings to the venue had the same effect on me as what happens when a frequently visited grocer or drug store (i.e., outsourcer) switches merchandise from aisle to aisle. In passing, I'd like to urge on every book person the great importance of Frankfurt. Try it rather than Hawaii or a Caribbean cruise for at least one of your travel splurges. This goes especially for the true book persons among us. The 1997 expo gave floors 0 and 1 of centerpiece building, Number 4 to electronic media. Who knows how much room will be given to books by the year 2007?

Now for a couple of comments on **Charleston Conference Number 17**. For the second year, "The Other Side of the Street" brought publishers and librarians together at a Lively Lunch. Questions about type size and cover materials were discussed. Here I would like to quote from an article in *Bookselling This Week*, the weekly newspaper of the **American Booksellers Association**. *BSTW* for November 24, 1997, gave much space to a panel discussion conducted November 17 by the **Center for Communications** in the Time/Life Building, New York. The subject was "Online Commerce: The Virtual Bookstore." Among other issues of great interest which we also confronted at our aforementioned Lively Lunch: short print runs. Mention was made of **Docutech** which is now being promoted by **Simon and Schuster**. A neighboring publisher, **Edwin Mellen Co.**, has invited me to inspect their use of this system. They no longer have inventory — it's all in their computer and a reprint of stock is made in runs of ten sets of sheets, with each being bound when ordered by a customer. The "Virtual" story also mentions **Ingram's** "Lightning Print." **Phil Pfeffer**, Random House CEO, and president expresses his enthusiasm for these new short run techniques by saying that he hopes never again to have to use the terms "out of print" or "out of stock indefinitely." Do you reckon Mr. Pfeffer's enthusiasm is partly due to his not-too-long-ago reign as chairman at Ingram? I'm sure we all utter a fervent "amen" to that hope.

I strongly recommend that all of you read the aforementioned story entitled, "Virtual Bookstore See Room to Grow." To obtain a copy — phone **Bryant Frazer**, Editor, *BSTW*, American Booksellers Association — 800-637-0037. And, forgive me please, I have to gripe about the sudden popularity of the word "virtual" which has been around for at least a hundred years, since **James Froude**, the English historian, wrote about the Romans being "actual or virtual rulers of the entire Mediterranean circuit." My favorite dictionary's definition is: "virtual: being so in practice or effect, though not in fact or name." Have I or have I not been a "virtual" bookseller for the past 64 years? 🌱