February 2002

Oregon Trails -- Books and Bookstores

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Recommended Citation

Leonhardt, Tomas (2002) "Oregon Trails -- Books and Bookstores," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 14: Iss. 1, Article 33.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.3157>

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should be quite easy for staff members. With this in mind, role-playing exercises among library staff can be very helpful to members as it provides a safe environment to practice high quality interaction under typical circumstances.

Libraries can also improve their customer service interaction by remembering that the customer is always the customer. Customers frequently want something and are bound and determined to have whatever the object of their desire. Professional librarians, however, are taught to draw out a patron's needs as opposed to wants and seek to fulfill those needs. However, in today's world, library staff should think of library users as "customers," not the traditionally termed "patron." Librarians should not seek to abandon the noble goal of helping discern what a customer needs and providing it. What they should seek to do, however, is to give the customer what he/she wants, but also provide access and guidance to resources and tools that they feel will give the customer what they need as well.

In providing customers the services and resources that they want, library staff should also be delivering those services in a positive manner. Libraries should adopt a "yes" mentality, as customers do not want to hear why they "can't" or the word "no." As Hyman suggests, libraries spending a great deal of time explaining why they

"can't" repeatedly about the same issue, should refocus and figure out how they "can" do what the customer wants!

Part of this "yes" mentality can be created from the feedback of the customers themselves. Customers always provide feedback to a service provider and that feedback should be used as a barometer for how the library is doing in providing service. Customers who do not speak up will frequently do so if a staff member asks them, "How did we do today?" or "Did we help you find what you need?" Staff must be encouraged to solicit this feedback from their customers, as it is a gift that will help the library hone its customer service mentality. That feedback should be passed along the appropriate chain of command in order for all staff to benefit from the interaction. According to **Julie Brewer** in her article "Service Management," "a customer-driven organization is guided by customer wants and needs. It views competition as a challenge...It views complaints as opportunities to be exploited and publicizes its improvements." (Brewer 2008).

Customers will frequently tell staff that the basic services are not enough. Customers thrive on additional services and libraries are notoriously well known for the value-added services they provide. Whether it is readers' advisory or providing bibliographic instruction, libraries have always gone beyond merely providing access. This tradition should be continued, expanded, and, in a new paradigm for libraries, promoted. Promotion

can take the form of marketing and public relations' campaigns, but a library's staff will frequently find that word-of-mouth about good (or bad) customer service will generate a great deal of promotion as well.

Customer service is much more than what is presented herein. While the above tips offer one a beginning at building customer-oriented library services, one must consider that a great deal of work needs to be done. Customer service, to truly succeed as a mindset, but begin at the top of the organization, must be integrated throughout its departments, be provided by employees trained in customer service ideology, and focus on the details of provided services. While customer service may be a non-stop, never ending process, the above suggestions can be crucial to helping libraries not only survive in today's competitive information marketplace, but thrive as well.

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Oregon Trails — Books and Bookstores

by **Tomas Leonhardt** <twleonhardt@earthlink.net>

You can't always get what you want but sometimes you just might get what you need. Such wisdom from a rock and roll song but it has made sense to me of late, returning from Germany with no job and lots of time on my hands. I want a job but need the rest and am trying to make the most out of the sabbatical that I never got — until now.

Spending six months or so in Europe was good for me. I greatly improved my German, was introduced to **Zagreb** and the **Croatian** people, and learned to appreciate American higher education and culture more than I had before flying off to Bremen.

I also enjoyed direct access to shelf after shelf of German literature, books on language, mysteries, German children's books, and so on. I could walk from the **IUB** campus to **Veogesack**, a lovely town on the **Weser** River where the **Lesum** feeds into it. **Otto Buecher** was the bookstore in **Veogesack** and while it did not have the stock that I could

find in the stores in the center of Bremen, it was convenient and carried most of **Ingrid Noll's** books. If you don't know **Ingrid Noll**, I highly recommend her. Some in Germany consider her a **Krimi** (mystery) writer, but I consider her a good novelist who can draw characters the way **Georges Simenon** did, especially in his psychological novels although his **Maigret** mysteries are first rate. The only **Noll** titles I know of in English are *Hell Hath No Fury* (the German title is *Der Hahn ist Tod*—the rooster is dead). The other is called *Die Apotheke*, *The Pharmacist* in English. I haven't read the English translations so I can't vouch for the style but I can assure you that her stories are gripping and her female characters don't let men get in their way.

In addition to the regular bookstore in **Veogesack**, department stores and the **Deutsche Post** (the post office) also sell books, mainly mysteries and romances but

some remainders and reprints of classics in the public domain, too.

In downtown Bremen, my favorite bookstore was **Buchhandlung Geist**, what one would call a scholarly bookstore. It successfully tempted me with its **Germanistik** offerings, both language and literature. But to spread the wealth, my wife and I also frequented three other book stores in Bremen, **Thalia**, **Phoenix**, and **Storm**. Each of those bookshops and **Geist**, too, had an English language section where we could stock up on our favorite mystery writers. Some American and English classic titles were also carried, aimed not just at high school and college students but also to the general reader.

Thalia and **Phoenix** were practically next to one another and near the **Café Knigge**, with its outdoor tables in the **Fuessgaenger Zone** (pedestrian mall). We could make our purchases in one or both stores and then

continued on page 79

browse through them over a glass of beer or a cup of Knigge coffee or hot chocolate and maybe one of the pastries available just inside the main entrance.

Every bookstore we patronized and the large department stores, too, had bins of books on sale. Many were remainders, others were just cheap editions of works on learning a foreign language, travel guides, cookbooks, books on **WWII** and **Hitler** (a growth industry it seemed), and picture books aimed at children. **Harry Potter** is alive and well in Germany in both English and German editions. But what they didn't have was the third volume of **Phillip Pullman's** "His Dark Materials," *The Amber Spyglass*. I had found a copy of *The Golden Compass* and read it on the recommendation of my wife. I began and finished it on the flight to San Francisco in June on my way to the **ALA** annual conference. I had to have the second volume, *The Subtle Knife*. The first store I tried in San Francisco didn't have it and didn't know what I was talking about but the **Alexander Book Co.**, 50 Second St., took me right to the book and the clerk told me that I wouldn't be able to put it down. Not only that, but when I got back to Bremen and finished the book, I had to have the final installment. My wife was in England at the time and agreed to buy the third volume for me. I sat for five hours straight finishing the book and the trilogy. But don't take my word for it, read them yourselves. Yes, they are purportedly for young adults but in the January 20 *New York Times Book Review*, **Margo Jefferson** has an article in the "On Writers and Writing" section (p. 23) called "Harry Potter for Grown-Ups." She sums him up far better than I ever could so if you don't want to take my word for it, take hers.

I had intended to stay in Bremen longer than six months, but I needed to come home for many reasons, one of which was to help my parents re-locate to their native state and mine, North Carolina. That meant flying to Texas after a quick visit in Eugene, Oregon to see all four of my children and three grandchildren, one of whom had been born a little over a month before I got back home.

Eugene is a university town with great public transport, bicycle lanes, and pedestrians everywhere. You can walk or bike most places easily and with a bit of effort, can even walk to the major shopping mall using city paths and foot bridges. From where I am writing this, I can walk across the Willamette River and be in a **Barnes & Noble** for my *New York Times* and cup of coffee in just 15 minutes. I can even wear the beret that I bought in Bremen and not feel conspicuous or out of place. I need a car or bus to get to the **Border's** and a bus or a long walk or bike ride to the **Smith's Family Book Store**, one

of the great used bookstores in the country, not just for the stock but for the atmosphere and knowledgeable employees. They don't serve coffee in the store but this is Oregon so a good coffee house is never more than a block away. There is at least one other used bookstore that I haven't visited yet and there is a true antiquarian dealer downtown, too, but my thin pocketbook has kept me away. But browsing is free so maybe I should get to know the place better and the other store, too, but until then, I won't mention them by name.

I was in Eugene less than a week before flying to San Antonio, Texas and then going by automobile to Canyon Lake, Texas (nearby towns include Startzville, Sattler, Gruene, and New Braunfels). I was truly in the land of the automobile, the pickup truck, the SUV. Deer abound but there are no pedestrians and few bicyclists despite highway shoulders wide enough to easily accommodate bicycles. The shoulders of the county roads in the Texas Hill Country are generous and used as reverse passing lanes — slower drivers pull onto the shoulder to let others go by. Many locals drift onto the shoulder and take it easy, taking their half out of the middle of the safe side of the road. Whenever you move onto the shoulder to let someone pass, you almost always get a friendly wave of thanks for your courtesy. When the passing driver fails to thank you, it is probably a tourist or stranger who has not yet learned the local customs. Friendly, but I missed the cyclists and those on foot.

I won't say that Canyon Lake is in the middle of Nowhere but it is damned close or not far away, depending on your perspective. There is a coffee shop over in Sattler, the **Old Sattler Bakery** where one can get good coffee, great breakfasts and lunches, and friendly, Texas hospitality. On your second visit you will be greeted by name.

But what I wanted, when not driving my mother to the hospital or shopping, was a bookstore, somewhere where I could lay my hands on some good reading. I had left most of my German purchases in Eugene until I could return. I was rationing my **Ingrid Noll** and was not in the mood for some of the others and besides, there just wasn't enough room to bring them with me. But I could buy some more and bring them back. You figure that one out.

The closest real bookstore (I am not counting the Walmart offerings a mere 25 or so miles away) turned out to be a **Border's** about 40 miles away, too far away to visit everyday for a *New York Times*, but not too far away to keep me from driving over for a *Sunday Times*. Happily, though, the **Ty Preston**

Memorial Library was less than ten miles from my parents' house and I knew from previous visits, that **Ty Preston** had an ongoing book sale with lots of interesting titles on the shelves in addition to the standard mysteries, romances, and popular non-fiction works. Besides, I needed to check my e-mail.

I first visited the **Ty Preston Memorial Library** about least ten years ago, give or take. It has grown, quadrupled in size, over that time span, but it is still one of the smallest libraries in Texas or anywhere else I have been since my days in Big Delta, Alaska where the Post Library (Army) had to have been smaller.

Ty Preston has a decent collection, helped along by donations of money and books and the network of public libraries in Texas. I felt proud to be a librarian every time I went inside but I kept that to myself and just admired the operation, a true spiritual oasis in an area that basically catered to tourists although the general population is growing fast.

Across the street from the library, more or less, is **Book Mania**. It is no **Smith's Family** and probably never will be but it fills a need and serves a cause. The pricing is fair and the women who own and run the store are fonts of information about the area and provide service with a smile. In addition to its limited selection of used and new paperbacks (some hardbacks), mostly romance, mystery, and westerns, one could also buy hand-made wood products, local maps, cards, and hobby materials. It is hard enough making a living selling books under the best of circumstances but out here, it pays to have a sideline or are the books the sideline?

I was able to survive those three weeks or so in the Hill Country without sacrificing good reading material. Now that my parents have moved away, I will probably never return (although I wouldn't mind going back to Gruene, Texas, out towards New Braunfels) to enjoy a meal at the **Gristmill Restaurant** and a long-neck Lone Star at **Gruene Hall** (www.gruenehall.com) while enjoying some live music. Maybe the next time **ALA** has a Midwinter meeting in San Antonio, maybe.

Back in Eugene, I have joined the public library. Per capita, it seems no larger than the **Ty Preston Memorial Library** but a couple of blocks away from the present building, I can see the large crane and know that it is helping build the new **Eugene Public Library**. It has been a long time coming but from the looks of the framework of the new building, it will have been worth the wait. And because I judge a community by its library services, Eugene will become a better place to live. 🐾