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Inside Pandora's Box: A reviews of the 2001 Legal Information Buyers Guide

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Bet You Missed It

Press Clippings — In the News — Carefully Selected by Your Crack Staff of News Sleuths

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CYBER LIBERALS

By **Phil Dankert** (Cornell University)

According to the results of an extensive survey of American public opinion, Internet users are more tolerant of diverse viewpoints than those who do not venture into cyberspace. "The findings challenge the notion that the Internet could lead users to become more narrow-minded in their beliefs because they can easily filter what they see in cyberspace and block out views with which they disagree." For those interested in finding out more, the data from this survey, a part of the 2000 General Social Survey, has been placed on the University of Maryland's Web site (<http://www.webuse.umd.edu>).

See — Jeffrey R. Young, "A Study Finds More Tolerance Among Web Users," *Chronicle Of Higher Education*, p. A33, Jun. 29, 2001.

A DELAYED PHOENIX RISES

by **Pamela M. Rose** (University at Buffalo)

After 25 years of preparation, the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, successor to the great library burned in A.D. 48, is scheduled to open this fall. Shaped like a cylinder sliced on the diagonal with a buried front end, the library is supposed to help restore Alexandria to its former cultural glory. Director Ismail Serageldin hopes to make the library an international center of expertise on scientific ethics, as well as offering a planetarium, calligraphy institute, a replica of Sweden's Nobel museum, and a conservation center for restoration of ancient papyri.

See — "Modern World Wonder" in Random Samples section edited by Constance Holden, *Science*, p. 1255, Aug. 17, 2001.

IT'S NOT JUST FOR DINNER ANYMORE!

by **Pamela M. Rose** (University at Buffalo)

The Lausanne cooked spaghetti experts (who, in 1999 in a letter to *Science*, insisted that cooked spaghetti is vastly superior to uncooked for modelling DNA) report they have now used a cooked spaghetti model to "expose hitherto unknown intimate details of how knotted strings break." Really!

See — "Annals of Spaghetti" in Random Samples section edited by Constance Holden, *Science*, p. 1255, Aug. 17, 2001.

ORGANISMAL BIOLOGY

by **Pamela M. Rose** (University at Buffalo)

Backed by an intriguing alliance of science and tech figures, the All Species Project launched last fall in California aims to record all 7 million to 100 million species on earth within 25 years. The goal is to "...[look] for the bottlenecks and the holes in funding" rather than duplicate ongoing species inventories and database projects.

See — "Whole Earth Catalog", in ScienceScope section (contributors Jocelyn Kaiser, David Malakoff, Martin Enserink) in *Science*, p. 1571, Aug. 31, 2001.

THE RIGHT UNDERGRADUATE STUFF

by **Pamela M. Rose** (University at Buffalo)

Special issue explores global trends in undergraduate science education. The section includes 9 articles and one viewpoint piece that cover this vast topic, but common themes include improving the introductory course, increasing diversity in the student population, involving more students in research earlier in their studies, and the ironic difficulty of online scientific instruction via a technology (the Internet) created largely to serve the global scientific community.

Article titles are: Reintroducing the Intro Course; Making Room for Diversity Makes Sense; Europe Seeks to Harmonize Its Degrees; Student Research: What Is It Good For?; China Broadens Training for Elite Students; Online, On Campus: Proceed

with Caution [note that MIT intends to offer world-class courses for free in the next two years on their "OpenCourseWare" Web site]; Are We Having Fun Yet? Joys and Sorrows of Learning Online [an excellent real-life experience with an online introductory biology course]; Open University: A Pioneer Presses On; and Online Science Is a Stretch for Asia. The viewpoint is titled: Undergraduate Research, Graduate Mentoring, and the University's Mission.

See — "Trends in Undergraduate Education", special section (contributors: Jeffrey Mervis, Erik Stokstad, Camille Mojica Ray, Robert Koenig, Ding Yimin, Kathryn Brown, R. John Davenport, John Pickrell, Dennis Normile, and Christina Gonzalez) in *Science*, p. 1607-1626, Aug. 31, 2001.

Inside Pandora's Box —

The 2001 Legal Information Buyer's Guide and Reference Manual: A Valuable Resource: A Review of an Essential Tome

Column Editor: **Jack G. Montgomery** (Coordinator of Collection Services, Western Kentucky University, Library Automation and Technical Services, 309 Cravens Library Complex W.K.U. Libraries, One Big Red Way, Bowling Green, KY 42101) <Jack.Montgomery@wku.edu>

The 2001 Legal Information Buyer's Guide and Reference Manual: A Valuable Resource: A Review of an Essential Tome

I usually do not employ this column for product reviews, however, I am going to make an exception in this situation for **Kendall**

Svengalis's 2001 Legal Information Buyer's Guide and Reference Manual. It has been published by **Rhode Island Law Press** annually for eight years and remains the most effective guide for lawyers, lay-persons and librarians to the world of legal publishing. The world of

legal publishing has long been a source of mystery and frustration for acquisitions and collection development librarians outside the pale of the law library. For many, the concept of a looseleaf service was esoteric enough not to

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mention the task of critically evaluating such materials. Add to this dilemma, that according to many sources, the volume of legal information is doubling every 22 months. The task of keeping track, let alone evaluating legal materials for your collection, is a daunting one at best and nearly impossible for the uninitiated.

Having spent the early part of my own career in academic law libraries (1983-1998), I, too, experienced firsthand the foibles and vagaries of managing law collections. When **Ken Svengalis** published his first guide, I was thrilled to have a tool for measuring and evaluating my collection authored by such a respected and commercially neutral member of our community. In the past, **Ken Svengalis**, Rhode Island State Law Librarian since 1982 and a law librarian for 23 years has been a long time "consumer advocate" for the law library community. Sited and honored on numerous occasions for his work, **Ken** pioneered the "write for order" method used in the past by librarians to control ever escalating subscription costs. During the 1980s he labored tirelessly to try to reach out to both the library and legal publishing community to effect product awareness, cost regu-

lation and sound business practices with regard to the world of legal publishing. No one is more suited to write such a manual as **Ken** has done with his *2001 Legal Information Buyer's Guide and Reference Manuals*.

The 2001 edition follows a similar format to earlier editions but with an expanded coverage, including a treatise cost spreadsheet for over 1,300 titles including a cost comparison analysis for the past four years, to allow the reader to see and hopefully predict the rates of increases for the future. In addition, the organization of the manual allows the librarian to first grasp a bit of background on the world of legal publishing, FTC guidelines covering this industry. In chapter five he provides the all important criteria for evaluating and making decisions regarding the building and maintenance of a collection of legal materials. After covering the world of supplementation, **Ken** explores the world of common business practices utilized by the legal publishing industry such as unsolicited shipments and telemarketing with suggestions as to how librarians should respond to the various situations that regularly present themselves.

In part two of **Ken's** manual, the organizational focus shifts to the various categories of legal materials, beginning with federal and state statutes, moving on to digests, case reporters,

legal periodicals, citators, and even finding the law on the Internet. The standard format of the split page entries provide the author and title, the publisher, information of supplementation and alternate formats. The next section typically covers cost information on the different purchase options. Finally, the reader is provided with descriptive and evaluative information on the title. Beginning with chapter 26, the text turns to the evaluation of legal treatises and is organized by subjects such as civil rights, family and zoning law. Each publisher's offerings on each section of law are presented to facilitate evaluation and comparison. Chapter 27 features the various state specific publications for each jurisdiction and provides sources for online information. Finally, the manual's appendices feature legal publishers' company histories, addresses, and other contact information. Representative used lawbook prices, cost saving advice and a bibliography complete this essential guide to legal materials.

Rather than further rhapsodizing about the inherent values of the *2001 Legal Information Buyer's Guide and Reference Manual*, just let me say that if you have the need, and can purchase but one title of this type in the upcoming year, purchase the 2001 edition of **Mr. Svengalis's** book. You will not regret it. 🌿

Drinking From The Firehose — On the Nature of Keeping Things

by **Eleanor I. Cook** (Appalachian State University, Boone, N.C. 28608)

The inspiration for this column began this summer with my reading of **Nicholson Baker's** book *Doublefold*, but had its genesis even before that event I had a minor revelation during a Faxon-sponsored breakfast a few ALA's ago. Richard Rowe asked his guests to consider why archiving of electronic content was so important and what we were going to do to achieve this. I had an "ah ha!" moment while sitting in Faxon's hotel suite drinking coffee and nibbling on breakfast hors d'oeuvres, and Mr. Rowe spied my agitation and inquired about it. I think I shocked him. I said, "Well, we can't keep everything can we?" I had been thinking about the great Library of Alexandria and what a shame it was that it was destroyed, along with so many other wonderful collections across the ages. I realized in that instance: What does it really matter? And I did not have an answer. I intrinsically knew however, that anyone who thinks we should attempt to keep everything is wasting time. We all know people who would love to do this, even if they understand that practically, it's not possible. If we could have total access to the knowledge of the ages, what more might we understand today?

But in that instance, and later, while pondering **Baker's** book, I had to come to a conclusion: We can't keep everything - yet, we really want to. It's human nature. And humans have been dealing with this urge since we've walked upright.

In this world, there are the Keepers and the ThrowAways. Not everyone is a pure type of course - many of us have a blended set of genes

for this trait. (I am convinced it is influenced by genetics.) Most people who know me probably think I am a hopeless "Keeper," (my office appears to be a wreck), but it's more complex than that. You might be a Keeper and yet be entirely orderly in what you keep - others can be ThrowAways and yet be constantly in a state of confusion (and perhaps threw away that one thing that was really needed yesterday...). Keeping and ThrowAwaying may be combined with being orderly or chaotic, so think of it as a four-part matrix.

Librarians live at the heart of this tension as we manage collections of materials that have varying values for humankind. And not all librarians are Keepers, indeed not! So many of our colleagues really live to weed. You know they do. So does **Nicholson Baker**. And of course, he is the Czar of the Keepers!

I am the child of two extreme cases. My mother was a true ThrowAwayer and my Father was a chronic Keeper. As long as they were together, there was a semblance of balance in our household. My parents recognized these traits in themselves, and they respected each others' tendencies. In other words, they really worked together to keep things "normal." When my mother died in 1987, all hell broke loose and by the time my father died in 1996, their house was crammed with belongings beyond belief. It took me two years to clean it out. And it taught me a few things about the process of collecting a life worth of "stuff."

What does this have to do with libraries? Can't you see it? We are surrounded in our profession by people who have extreme tendencies. And depending on OUR tendencies, we are either fighting a battle or supporting a habit. These habits have an influence on what goes on in libraries, and it has a great deal to do with how we set policy, and how we are perceived by others outside our profession. Think about our most important donors - they tend to be Keepers who wish us to maintain their lovingly-collected treasures into perpetuity. Think about

the raging controversies many of us face about establishing off-site storage spaces, micro-filming of local newspapers, and weeding projects. These are real issues for us. And it all boils down to how we deal with these Keeper and ThrowAway tendencies that we have to manage - both within ourselves and in those who control and influence our budgets.

There is another aspect to all this that needs to be considered, and was brought to my attention by **Nicholson Baker's** book as well as my pondering at the Faxon Breakfast. That has to do with the nature of solutions to problems. Humans have a tendency to develop clever, though occasionally bizarre theories and then an urge to defend simplistic solutions based on those theories, applied to various huge obstacles in the way of our forward progress as a species. If we find a simple (not necessarily easy) answer, we wish to apply it to the most possible cases of the problem. These days, we praise people who think "outside the box," though for centuries before us that was not necessarily the case. Such tendencies eventually find us out on a limb, not sure what to do next (example - pes-

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