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sotto voce-Taking the Step from Speaking Softly to Listening Loudly

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depending on your status (student, staff or faculty), and computer CDs circulate for 30 days.

In response to the question, "And what have we not yet thought about?" I would suggest the most important thing to do is evaluate each CD as it arrives. Many accompanying CDs are either "junk," duplicate what you already have in print, or are of marginal value. Set up a procedure to refer these materials to a subject specialist, or make the decision yourself. Many institutions, like Virginia Tech, have limited space, particularly in units like the Media Center. There is no point in blindly adding material if it does not add value to your collection.

This topic has been addressed several times on different listservs. As recently as May 2000 this question was discussed on Serialst and many valuable (and varied) responses were posted. To see a summary of the responses go to the Serialst archive (HYPERLINK <http://list.uvm.edu/archives/serialst.html> <http://list.uvm.edu/archives/serialst.html>) under May 2000, and select the subject line: CDs with periodicals (posted by Caroline Dean).

Response: (Submitted by Ann McHugo, Acquisitions Services Librarian, Dartmouth College Library):

Your question is interesting in that the topic is one now being discussed at Dartmouth College Library too. Unfortunately, we don't really have an answer for the University of Cape Town. Each of the ten libraries within our system handles serials-with-accompanying-CD-ROMs differently. There is no uniform policy (a fairly common event in our distributed system). The only standardized practice we have is for the first instance of a CD-ROM accompanying a particular serial. When that happens, an Acquisitions staff member contacts the bibliographer responsible for the serial and sends the CD-ROM to that person for decision. The bibliographers retention and handling decision is noted in the database.

At that point consistency ends. Some of our libraries shelve CD-ROMs separately; some shelve with the serial issue. Some of our libraries have accompanying CD-ROMs cataloged; some do not. Some libraries have the CD-ROMs labeled and barcoded for circulation; some do not. If the CD-ROMs receive cataloging, then they have individual check-in records; if they do not receive cataloging, then they are checked-in with the serial issue and show as a note in the check-in box only. Our bibliographers are starting to look at our situation to determine whether we should have more standardized management practices for these items. But for now, we are all over the map, and really can't give good guidance to anyone. 🐾

sotto voce — Taking the Step from Speaking Softly to Listening Loudly



by Bob Schatz (everbob@yahoo.com)

After giving it serious thought, I've decided to discontinue my contributions to "sotto voce", at least as a regular column. As I drive around North America visiting libraries, I've become aware of how much less I know for certain than when I was younger. I also find my thoughts turning more often to things of a personal nature than to the vagaries of the world of librarianship, publishing, and vendoring.

A column written for a professional publication should expand readers' knowledge, or at least reveal otherwise hidden truths. That is difficult to accomplish when the writer has far more questions about his world than answers. I know that somewhere out there is a person who knows what kind of books will exist in the future, who understands how libraries will serve the very different demands of patrons in the coming years, decades, and centuries. This person will be able to reveal what kinds of publishing will remain in the electronic era of the 2000s, and will be able to answer the age-old question, "What the hell is a publisher doing buying a systems vendor?" As I ponder these questions myself, I'm fairly certain that it will not be me. Coming to grips with that, I don't think it fair to ATG readers that I intrude upon your time by spouting mere conjecture. Our world is cluttered-up enough with writing that is centered on form instead of content for me to want to add to the noise. Thus, I take my leave of this column rather than risking its deterioration to that level.

In parting, I'll share with you the one thing I feel certain about, (and it doesn't take submitting it six times each year to get this message across): It's about people. It always has been and always will be. The work we all undertake, whether we be vendors, publishers, or librarians, is about helping people improve their world and their lives. The way we

interact with each other is far more important than the way our computer systems interface. The books, journals, and technologies we deal with are conduits through which information flows. They represent the means, not the ends, of librarianship. Technology exists as a tool to help us help each other. It is supposed to work for us, not the other way around. If we are not careful, though, we'll find ourselves working for the machine, a process which, I fear, has already begun. In the face of that, it is worthwhile to dedicate ourselves to whatever it takes to retain our humanity in this age where innovators too often ask "can it be done" rather than "should it be done."

And with those revelations, I bring this column to a close (or at least a hiatus) for my contributions. Thanks, Katina, for giving me the opportunity to express my thoughts. To those of you who responded to my columns via email, thanks for that too. It was fun getting "fan mail." If the clouds part on one of my trips and new truths about librarianship and vending are revealed to me, I hope you'll allow me to share my thoughts with you again as a guest columnist.

I'm beginning to embrace the idea that the truth is not so much in the telling as it is in the living, and I look forward to the time I'll share with many of you in my continued work with Everetts. Through our professional interactions, I hope we'll be able to expand the human values that still surround this profession. Those actions, not the columns we write, are the real statements we make about what is important to us, even if, in this complex world, they are only heard as a sotto voce. 🐾

Editor's note: We will miss Bob Schatz, and his astute comments! Does anyone else out there want to pick up "sotto voce"? — KS

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products from the project—a set of tools, processes, and techniques—will be useful to the library community in general as it looks to provide electronic resources to their communities. A separate task force from within the project will focus on working with vendor-based database products to arrive at agreed-upon data element definitions and terms, specific data that can be collected, and methods for reporting data to libraries. This ARL Task Force on Statistics from Vendor-Based Da-

tabase Products will also be building on existing work in the field. Participating institutions include University of Alberta, Arizona State University, Auburn University, University of Chicago, University of Connecticut, Cornell University, University of Illinois at Chicago, University of Manitoba, University of Maryland, University of Massachusetts-Amherst, University of Nebraska, New York Public Library, University of Notre Dame, University of Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania State University, University of Pittsburgh, Purdue Uni-

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