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Adventures in Librarianship: Final Report by the Task Force for Committee Review

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CAPTAIN EARTH DECODER RING

by Sandra Beehler (Old Dominion University)

This brief mention in *Wired* of the 10,000-year library effort led me to the Web site for the Long Now Foundation (www.longnow.org). Long Now and Stanford University Libraries held a symposium on June 30-July 2, 2000 whose purpose was "to deliberate on the permanence of information and [the] need for long-term thinking about it" and to initiate plans for a 10,000 year library. The Founda-

tion is also involved in the design of a "Rosetta Disk" a two-inch nickel disk engraved with analog text and images of microscopic size in all known languages to be used at some far future time to reconstruct the "narrative of civilization." The disk is meant to have at least a 2,000-year lifespan.

See — "Long Term Memory", *Wired* 8.07 (July 2000), p. 94.

DO NOTHING AND DIE

by Phil Dankert (Cornell)

The British government has commissioned a business plan for a major international "e-university." This brief article notes that consortia of institutions will be invited to bid to create it. Online instruction up to the bachelor's-degree level, as well as a new two-year degree, will be offered. "The e-university will focus solely on teaching and will carry out no research." In a speech announcing it Education Secretary David Blunkett "warned universities that they had no

choice but to immerse themselves in online activities...The 'do nothing' universities will not survive..."

See — David Walker, "Britain Plans a Major E-University, With Goal of Competing Globally," *Chronicle Of Higher Education*, May 19, 2000, p. A57.

Does Internet addiction exist? In this very interesting article

two professors at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute urge caution in using pathological labels for what may be someone's passing immersion in the Internet. Much of it is devoted to brief descriptions of research that has been conducted on the topic. They make it quite clear that in the next round of Internet studies more solid questions must be included. For instance, the nature of people's activities on the Internet must be considered rather than simply the extent of their use of it. Researchers need to do a better job of collecting and analyzing data about Internet use. In closing, it is noted that "we mustn't forget that the Net has actually improved the lives of many people."

See — Joseph B. Walther and Larry D. Reid, "Understanding the Allure of the Internet," *Chronicle Of Higher Education*, February 4, 2000, p. B4-B5.

Adventures in Librarianship: Final Report by the Task Force for Committee Review

by Ned Kraft (Order Librarian, Ralph J. Bunche Library) <Kraftno@state.gov>

Objective

Pursuant to the directive issued by the Vice-Director for Informational Information, and further clarified by the Assistant VDII (as mentioned by the Vice-Assistant VDII in her memo of 12 June), this task force was formed for the express purpose of reviewing library committee and task force formation, proliferation, and inflammation with special attention paid to the cumulative results (speculation) of committees and task forces and to the possible disbursement of task force and committee members (rehabilitation).

Methodology

To pursue its objective, the Task Force for Committee Review met as a committee to discuss the pertinent issues, plan refreshments, channel former (deceased) committee members, and reach agreement as to how it could proceed as, in fact, a task force rather than a committee. With its infrastructure thereby clarified and delineated, and after coffee had been served, the task force devised a survey vehicle that would allow it to analyze the pertinent issues which it had previously been unable to analyze (as pertinent).

The survey was sent to a random sampling of all professional staff (roughly 100%). Although the immediate response rate was low (no survey was returned before the deadline), the Vice-Director was able to improve the response

rate (to roughly 100%) by issuing a carefully crafted email (some respondents characterized the reminder as a "threat").

Surveys were then independently tallied by an outside agent (the Vice-Director's son-in-law).

Survey Results

Although the survey was "anonymous" careful handwriting analysis revealed a relationship between tenure and cynicism toward the committee/task force process. Among respondents, as the years in service rose, so did the dissatisfaction. This measurement has a low margin of error (roughly 0.0%).

The survey also found that task force recommendations are rarely followed (some respondents used the word "never") when they conflict with the opinion of the Vice-Director. Again, there was near unanimity on this question, and the conclusion agrees with the historical record.

Recommendation

The Task Force for Committee Review recommends the following two options:

The Vice-Director could consider mandating that no professional ever reach more than three consecutive years of service with the organization. The survey results suggest that maintaining a professional staff with an average length of employment of 2.6 years or less will ensure enthusiasm for the Vice-Director's programs by tapping into what has been called the "rose-colored glasses" effect.

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As an alternate approach, the Task Force recommends that all current committees and task forces be replaced by a single Standing Committee for Affirmation, designed to respond to the Vice-Director's proposals quickly and "objectively." Anticipating high staff turnover on this committee, the Task Force suggests that the Standing Committee for Affirmation be staffed with paid library consultants who are already familiar with the basic purpose of the committee and for whom "objectivity" will cause little stress.

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Hong Kong in the 1970s—a time of rapid economic growth, and more significantly, of growth in self-confidence and the forging of a local identity. In a disarming style that is uniquely her own, Xi Xi weaves a deceptively child-like narrative against the background of the political and social problems of this complex society. Seldom has a writer captured the spirit of a generation with such apparent simplicity and ease. "The very first to depict Hong Kong from a fresh... human and emotional point of view... a place to live, to work, and to have fun; and for some, there are not many places in the world that can replace Hong Kong."

— *World Literature Today Renditions Press 1993*, 180 pages, ISBN 962-7255-11-4.

Hong Kong Stories: Old Themes New Voices

Edited by **Eva Hung**

In telling the Hong Kong story, young local writers face up to such issues as rapid economic and political changes as well as the continuous impact of Western

ideas and mores. They make a conscious effort to explore their own identity from a Hong Kong perspective and to describe Hong Kong's special way of life and the trials and tribulations of a populace caught between two cultures.

— *Renditions Press 1999*, 160 pages, ISBN 962-7255-20-3.

Marvels of a Floating City

Edited by **Eva Hung**

Xi Xi eloquently conveys the mood of the city during the 1980s in this collection of stories. In the first half of the decade, the Chinese and British governments negotiated Hong Kong's fate, occasioning intense soul-searching and close scrutiny of their society among the general population. The old and the new, the real and the fantastic, Western culture and local perception are skillfully woven together here to create narratives of the hopes, anger and fears which gripped the people of Hong Kong in this crucial period of their history.

— *Renditions Press 1997*, 160 pages, ISBN 962-7255-20-3.

A Girl Like Me & Other Stories

Translated by **Eva Hung**

This anthology presents samples from the author's entire writing career, ranging from the 1960s to the 1990s. It in-

cludes excerpts from Xi Xi's *Elegy for a Breast*, an intensely personal account of her own battle with cancer. Xi Xi's fascinating rendering of the fusion of East and West, tradition and modernity that is Hong Kong assures her place in the literary annals of this unique society.

"A writer who deserves a place in the international library."

— *Far Eastern Economic Review*.

"Her stories blend sophistication with an unflinching, childlike wonder."

— *Islands Renditions Press 1999*, 160 pages, ISBN 962-7255-20-3.

Flying Carpet—A Tale of Fertillia

Translated by **Diana Yue**

A small island sits south of Dragonland. This tiny speck, "smaller than a sesame seed" has a world-famous harbour rimmed with skyscrapers, an elite district on a mountain top, steep, narrow alleys, hawkers, street-sleepers, noisy markets, garish signs and borders. Back and forward in history, we accompany the Ips, master furniture makers, the Fas, aerated water suppliers, as well as Falibaba, secret possessor of a flying carpet on an up-and-down journey of the history of a city very much like Hong Kong.

— *Hong Kong University Press 2000*, 449 pages, ISBN 962-2094-708. 🐉

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We believe that this restructuring of the current committee and task force structure will immediately save the library substantial time, money, and resources (structurally).

Considering the results of this study, it would be unreasonable to expect the Vice-Director to implement the Task Force recommendations (above). Therefore we suggest that the results be shelved until such time as the lowest geological strata (some respondents used the name "Hades") accumulates are remarkable abundance of ice crystals.

Webworthy from page 84

nating glimpse of astronomers' visions; the Astronomy Departments list offers nascent astronomers a great snapshot of college choices; and Astronomy Pictures will dazzle viewers with some of the best photos of our universe. cdsweb.u-strasbg.fr/astroweb.html.

Bioweapons

Would you hire a former bioweapons lab scientist? Just how much *Pasteurella tularensis* does it take to cause rabbit fever? Check out these two sites to explore the fascinating topic of Bioweapons.

— Offering an in-depth look at the Chemical and Biological Weapons Nonproliferation Project at the Stimson Center in Washington, D.C. www.stimson.org/cwc.

— All the Virology on the WWW provides a list of disarmament projects and Department of Defense sites, and the full text of the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention. www.virology.net/garryfavwebbw.html.

Botany

Botanists and gardeners alike will be delighted to discover The International Plant Names Index (IPNI), a collaboration between The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, The Harvard University Herbaria, and the Australian National Herbarium. Names and basic bibliographical details of all seed plants were merged from the Index Kewensis (IK), the Gray Card Index (GCI) and the Australian Plant Names Index (APNI) to create the "most comprehensive listing of seed plant names available to date." With ongoing deduplication, standardization and verification of its currently over 1.3 million species, this will become the botanical names resource of choice. Future plans include setting up additional mirror sites, allowing users to contribute data directly, offering subscriptions, and allowing links to remote databases. Note that finding a plant name listed in IPNI does not mean it is the currently accepted name of an particular taxon. www.ipni.org.

Here's Looking At from page 66

opment, walkable schools, and work options located near homes. They want accessible public transit, and a less intensive focus on providing parking. A key-stone of their remedy is the use of an "alternative zoning code" called the "traditional neighborhood development ordinance" rather than trying to work on a revision of current code, which would be too time-consuming and difficult.

This review would not be complete without noting this book's presence as a physical, tangible object. It is no coffee-table book, but it is beautiful. It is a pleasure to hold, behold, and to read. The wide margins leave ample space for notes, and fingers, as well as for telling photographs. Most of the notes are laid out at the bottom of the page, which means the reader is not constantly flipping to the back. The book opens fully and stays open when laid down.

In short, this is a refreshing, compelling book — inside and out. It cuts to the very heart of what is wrong with the way we are making our America. Please read it, and take up the authors' chant: no more housing subdivisions! No more shopping centers! No more office parks! No more highways! Neighborhoods or nothing!

Back Talk from page 86

Web. This way the alumni receive value from their schools but not at the cost of supporting today's students.

Contributors to the Liblicense list on this topic which I read included the following: Ann Okerson, Dana Bostrom, Elhanan Adler, JoAnne Deeken, John Abbott, John Cox, Katherine Klemperer, Katherine Porter, Martin Borchert, Michael Spinella, Michele Newberry, Peter Boyce, Richard d'Avigdor, Rick Anderson, Scott Wicks, and Thomas Sanders.

Rumors from page 76

versity, University of Southern California, Texas A&M University, Virginia Tech University, University of Western Ontario, University of Wisconsin-Madison, and Yale University. The institutions are providing both the financial resources for the project as well as staff time for data collection and testing of methodologies. An article about the project appears in the June issue of *ARL: A Bimonthly Report on Research Library Issues and Actions from ARL, CNI, and SPARC* <<http://www.arl.org/news/210/emetrics.html>> and, throughout the project's three phases, information about the study and its activities will be available through the **ARL New Measures Initiative** Website at <<http://www.arl.org/stats/newmeas/newmeas.html>>, which also hosts resources relating to the other ARL new measures projects. For further information, contact **Rush Miller**, University of Pittsburgh <rgmiller@pitt.edu>; **Sherrie Schmidt**, Arizona State University <sherrie.schmidt@asu.edu>; or **Martha Kyrrilidou**, ARL Senior Program Office for Statistics and Measurement <martha@arl.org>.

Well, y'all, I have a huge Rumors file still not tapped and I've run out of room! I told you the summer was unbelievably busy! Stay tuned for November!

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