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## Letters to the Editor

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# From your (black belt watching) editor



**I** tell you, on some days I feel like I know something about what I'm doing and on others, I feel like I don't have a clue! One such latter day was when I watched my 17-year-old daughter, **Ileana**, get her black belt in karate. Besides the fact that Ileana started karate in first grade, this test took her nearly two hours and involved her executing 100 techniques and 10 katas in front of five stern and exacting judges. I thought her boyfriend's comment after it was over was apropos: "I knew Ileana could beat me up, but I didn't know she could do it so many ways."

My experience with Ileana's karate is kind of like a parable of my library life in the electronic world these days, and this issue of *ATG* is extra lengthy because it is

full, full, full of all the kinds of changes that make us feel kind of queasy. First, **Beau David Case** has done a bam-zowie job of getting a series of papers (and in most cases profiles too) by **Glen Worley**, **Thomas Marshall**, **Sara Tompson**, **David Corsin**, and **Anthony Oddo** (coming in September, watch for it!) on the state of current approval plans. Thanks to Beau for all his hard work. Also in this issue is a **Special Report** edited by the awesome **Ann Okerson**, on the ground-breaking **National Academy of Sciences** study, *The Digital Dilemma*. Included are papers from **Alan Inouye**, **Karen Hunter**, **Bernard Sorkin**, **Sarah Sully** and **Clifford Lynch**. Thanks to Ann for getting this important series of papers together.

And we have our usual wonderful, fabulous regular columns from **Bet You Missed It to Innovations** with lots in between as we all try to "cope." Oh, and we need to welcome **Allison Mays** who has agreed to edit **Library Profiles** and **Profiles Encouraged** and **Debbie Vaughn** as our new **Book Review** editor!

I hope to see a lot of you at ALA in Chicago. Have a great summer and talk to you for sure in September.

Yr. Ed.



## Letters to the Editor

Send letters to <[strauchk@earthlink.net](mailto:strauchk@earthlink.net)> (Please note **NEW** email address), phone or fax 843-723-3536, or snail mail: **Against the Grain**, MSC 98, The Citadel, Charleston, SC 29409. You can also send a letter to the editor from the *ATG* Homepage at <<http://www.against-the-grain.com>>.

### Dear Editor:

I read **Allen and Miller's** comparison between Internet Book Seller and Library Book Vendor (*ATG*, April, 2000, p.1 ff). Their conclusions are interesting and the issue of hype may well be true.

But, without directly dealing with the library acquisitions issue, I would like to present the perspective of a publisher.

When I publish a new book, I go to Amazon.com's Website and send them email saying that so and so book is now available for distribution. Within 24 hours, I get an email acknowledgment and within a few days, I get an initial order of a few copies. I send them on consignment—they won't pay for them unless they sell them. Meanwhile, I send them a diskette containing the book description, chapter titles, back of the book publicity material and so on as well as a digital copy of the book cover. Within about a week, Amazon.com loads the whole thing. The notation that the book is available for shipping within 24 hours appears on the screen.

Amazon.com allows readers to post their comments on the book as well. I personally stay out of this aspect.

Once the book is available for sale, I can periodically check Amazon.com's Website to see how the book is doing. I get to see the reports on all my titles—current month's, last month's, and year-to-date sales.

Amazon.com is excellent in terms of paying me at the beginning of every month. I don't need to invoice them and don't have to deal with accounts payable and so on.

What all this means to me is a superb service. I have a very good idea of what is going on. Amazon.com deals with me by e-mail and I get quick responses—no stumbling around with telephone service. My books are displayed on par with those of big publishers. A great amount of information is available to the readers and it is available 24 hours a day without charge—either to me or to the customer.

I feel that Amazon.com leveled the playing field for me. It is not a criticism of library vendors but I feel that very few took me into confidence to explain what they are doing, how I can help them in marketing my books, and how they can help me in getting my books into library market. In fact, weakness in library market is what makes Amazon.com so attractive for me. (On top of that, I have had only one return so far from Amazon.com.) Only a few library vendors tell me who I should contact if I have a question. Generally, these organizations are opaque for me and I get the feeling that they treat me as a nobody, if not worse. I feel I get royal treatment from Amazon.com. Their responsiveness to me is amazing and I sell a number of books solely because they are available on Amazon.com. They would not have sold as well through other traditional methods.

So my final point is that, before you knock down Amazon.com, please remember that it is a godsend to publishers such as myself. I also admit that I don't have experience with other Internet booksellers. Although I deal with B&N Online, it doesn't come anywhere near Amazon.com in terms of sales.

As a publisher, I would appreciate some kind of regular communication from library vendors telling me who I should contact if I have a question or a problem, who I should contact when I come up with a

new book, and so on—generally to make me feel like that I am part of the team. If I know what they want, I would be glad to help them to improve their services. But alas, I often feel as an outsider and as a nuisance to library vendors.

Thank you, **Rao Aluri**, Ph.D.

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Event	Issue	Ad Reservation	Camera-Ready
Reference Publishing	Sept. 2000	07/05/00	07/19/00
Charleston Conference	Nov. 2000	08/23/00	09/06/00
ALA Midwinter	Dec. 00/Jan. 01	10/25/00	11/08/00