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Op-Ed-Opinions and Editorials-What the Charleston Advisor Will Become

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Op Ed — Opinions and Editorials — What The Charleston Advisor Will Become

by **Chuck Hamaker** (Senior Editor and Editorial Advisor, *The Charleston Advisor* and Associate Director for Technical Services, University of North Carolina at Charlotte)
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Subscribers to *Against the Grain* and attendees at the **Charleston Conference** over the years, received an early copy of the preliminary issue of *The Charleston Advisor (TCA)*. Because it was a preliminary issue, it was not a full scale version of what Katina Strauch, Becky Lenzini, George Machovec, and I, members of the Board, and the early reviewers who bravely provided copy for the first issue, hope it will become. The paper issue alone is but a glimmer of the capabilities we are building into *TCA*.

The paper issue is a part of the vision, but only a part. It is very much a part of Katina Strauch's normal, "I see a problem and I want it solved" modus operandi, Becky's Lenzini's ability to organize, to bring resources together, George Machovec's perspectives and experiences, and our hope that customers all over the world won't have to reinvent the wheel for every product they look at. We expect the Website of *TCA* — <http://www.charlestonco.com> — to become the primary means to communicate with the *TCA* community providing rapid posting of new reviews, reader and publisher responses, and information on current developments on Web resources for information professionals.

Changes in products, search engines, and coverage can also be signaled quickly and easily on the Web. One of the most consistent problems with Web resources is what I call "the here today, gone tomorrow" syndrome. Because vendors and publishers don't really have a simple way to communicate changes, and often don't even realize they need to communicate them, a URL that worked yesterday may be gone today—without notification. I hope we will see content creators and owners providing advance notice to *TCA* and its community, of changes to their products, whether the registration you so carefully did six months ago is now invalid, or the site is being taken down for redesign. And perhaps Web producers will read and understand how their products are really used and will incorporate reactions from the *TCA* community into future releases.

We want to raise industry-wide issues for discussion and debate. Deep linking, for instance, rarely surfaces in

library literature, but if an academic publisher stops permitting direct access to their journal titles from unique URLs, then *TCA* readers should be ready to tell them how important the direct link is. The email response system and editorials we are planning should permit this to take place, should bring attention to issues the community cares about. Another example: Are you tracking the new ebook standards being developed by the industry?

Another unique aspect of *TCA* is that we are paying for reviews. Paying professionals to review products they know is a relatively unique approach for library literature. As a profession, we are used to "doing it for free." But *TCA's* approach is that if we pay for it, then we recognize the professional nature of what you are doing, and your ownership of the review, shared with us, means that we not only value it, but together, want it to be the best review possible.

TCA Board members will read for acceptance, but are also encouraged to respond from their own knowledge and often different perspectives about the products. It is more difficult to engage in a real dialog when the reviewer's work is not valued highly. By paying, we demonstrate our commitment to value. We expect reviewers to take the responsibility for the overall quality of the publication. You will note that we occasionally disagree with reviewers and hope that in paying them for their work, they recognize that, in publishing the review and disagreeing, we are respecting their views. That doesn't mean we won't reject a review or request changes. But our first reaction will normally be to respond, rather than to reject.

We believe in a dialog, not only between our Editorial Board and reviewers, but also between our subscribers and the producers of the products we review, between people who use the products, who find things to like or dislike, praise or scorn. And a primary

purpose for creating *TCA* is to encourage a dialog that is often simply not happening. In short, we expect to create a critical dialog space, prompted by reviews that are not afraid to state what the authors believe to be true. And we want subscribing communities to participate in that dialog.

We've been asked by several individuals: why are we charging so much? For the first year, *TCA* will carry at least 50 reviews of electronic products. At less than \$6.00 US per review, just how much do you spend on reviewing a product in your library? How much as a publisher (who gets this for about \$10.00 a review) would you spend on information-gathering about competitors or how to improve your product? How much do you pay for market research?

Add IP filtered access for the institutional subscriptions we are offering, reviews that can be conscientious and contentious if needed, a policy that up-front tells advertisers that they don't get special handling just because they want (or don't want) an ad, a commitment to fairness, more experienced folks running the operation, and you have *TCA*.

If anyone disagrees with us, tell us when you think we are wrong. Tell us what you like or think we need to do. Feedback is going to be as important as in any printed product. Hopefully more so. We want individuals to read and react and respond and contribute to reviews. A head start on the issues and capabilities, contacts and contract options, and a list of who to call that is using the product makes very good sense to us. We hope it does to you too.

The Charleston Advisor, Critical Reviews of Web Products for Information Professionals, has been created to provide signed, critical re-
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Popular Non-Fiction Titles
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Branden, Nathaniel. *Woman's Self-Esteem: Stories of Struggle, Stories of Triumph*. Jossey-Bass 1998 \$18.00 Cloth 0787943711.

Baer, Andrea. *Quit Smoking for Good: A Supportive Program for Permanent Smoking Cessation*. Crossing 1998 \$10.95 Paper 0895949431.

Askin, Jayne. *Search: A Handbook for Adoptees and Birthparents*. Oryx 1998 \$24.50 Paper 1573561150.

Maxwell, Bruce, 1959- *How To Find Health Information on the Internet*. Congressional 1998 \$35.95 Paper 1568022719.

Aaberg, Everett, 1963- *Muscle Mechanics*. Human Kinetics 1998 \$19.95 Paper 0880117966.

Hanaur, Stephen. *Inflammatory Bowel Disease: A Guide for Patients and their Families*. Lippincott-Raven 1999 \$24.00 Paper 0397517718.

Leonard, Robin. *Bankruptcy: Is It the Right Solution to your Debt Problems?* Nolo 1998 \$15.95 Paper 0873374495.

Skowronski, Gayle. *What You Need To Know About Vitamins, Minerals, & Supplements*. Crossing 1998 \$11.95 Paper 0895949350.

Wallace, Daniel J. (Daniel Jeffrey), 1949- *Making Sense of Fibromyalgia*. Oxford Univ Press 1999 \$25.00 Cloth 0195116119.

Strong, Howard. *What Every Credit Card User Needs To Know: How To Protect Yourself and Your Money*. Owl/Henry Holt 1999 \$9.95 Paper 080505314x.

Carter, Rita. *Mapping the Mind*. Univ of California 1998 \$29.95 Cloth 0520219376.

Phillips, Vicky. *Best Distance Learning Graduate Schools: Earning Your Degree Without Leaving Home*. Random House 1998 \$20.00 Paper 0679769307.

Goold, Grant B. *First Aid in the Workplace: What to Do in the First Five Minutes*. Brady Medical 1998 \$18.60 Paper 083595109x.

Lynn, Joanne, 1951- *Handbook for Mortals: Guidance for People Facing Serious Illness*. Oxford Univ Press 1999 \$25.00 Cloth 0195116623.

Woodhouse, Violet, 1948- *Divorce and Money: How to Make the Best Financial Decisions During Divorce*. Nolo 1998 \$26.95 Paper 0873374622.

Slesnick, Twila. *IRAs, 401(K)s & Other Retirement Plans: Taking your Money Out*. Nolo 1998 \$21.95 Paper 0873374487.

Vile, John R. *United States Constitution: Questions and Answers*. Greenwood 1998 \$39.95 Cloth 0313306435.

George, Mike. *Learn to Relax: A Practical Guide to Easing Tension & Conquering Stress*. Chronicle 1998 \$14.95 Paper 0811819086.

Westin, Jeane Eddy. *Finding your Roots: How to Trace your Ancestors at Home and Abroad*. G.P. Putnam's 1998 \$16.95 Paper 087477943x.

Perry, Richard D. *Blue Lakes & Silver Cities: The Colonial Arts and Architecture of West Mexico*. Univ of New Mexico 1997 \$25.00 Paper 0962081132.

Dupont, Robert L. 1936- *Anxiety Cure: An Eight-Step Program for Getting Well*. John Wiley 1998 \$14.95 Paper 0471247014.

Aldridge, Susan. *Magic Molecules: How Drugs Work*. Cambridge Univ 1998 \$24.95 Cloth 0521584140.

Null, Gary. *Complete Guide to Sensible Eating*. Seven Stories 1998 \$16.78 Paper 1888363614.

Cox, Daniel J. 1960- *Mountain Lion*. Chronicle 1999 \$18.95 Paper 0811819302.

Santiago, Esmeralda. *Almost A Woman*. Perseus 1998 \$24.00 Cloth 0738200433.

Kasahara, Kunihiko. *Origami Omnibus: Paper-Folding For Everybody*. Japan Publications 1998 \$22.00 Paper 4817090014.

Practical Guide to Aging: What Everyone Needs to Know; Ed. by Christine K. Cassel. New York Univ Press 1999 \$24.95 Cloth 081471515x.

Randall, R.C. (Robert C.) *Marijuana RX: The Patients' Fight for Medicinal Pot*. Thunder's Mouth 1998 \$14.80 Paper 1560251662.

Williamsburg: Decorating with Style. Clarkson Potter 1998 \$30.00 Cloth 0609600494.

Clarke, Peter. *Surviving Modern Medicine: How to Get the Best from Doctors, Family and Friends*. Rutgers Univ Press 1998 \$38.00 Cloth 0813525551.

Marr, Lisa. *Sexually Transmitted Diseases: A Physician Tells You What You Need To Know*. Johns Hopkins Univ 1998 \$39.95 Cloth 0801860423.

Jackson, Mary, 1946- *Car Smarts: An Easy-to-Use Guide to Understanding Your Car & Communicating with your Mechanic*. John Muir 1998 \$17.77 Paper 1562614576.

Gould, K. Lance. *Heal Your Heart: How You Can Prevent or Reverse Heart Disease*. Rutgers Univ Press 1998 \$25.00 Cloth 0813525233.

Kight, Marsha. *Forever Changed: Remembering Oklahoma City, April 19, 1995*. Prometheus 1998 \$26.95 Cloth 1573922382.

De Young, Jim. *London Theatre Walks: Thirteen Dramatic Tours through Four Centuries of History and Legend*. Applause Theatre 1998 \$14.95 Paper 1557832803.

Wilhide, Elizabeth. *Lighting: A Design Source Book*. Stewart, Tabori, Chang 1998 \$40.00 Cloth 1556706987.

Weinstock, Lorna. *Overcoming Panic Disorder: A Woman's Guide*. Contemporary 1998 \$14.95 Paper 0809231026.

Wauer, Roland H. *American Robin*. Univ of Texas Press 1999 \$17.95 Cloth 0292791232.

Gardner, Jo Ann, 1935- *Herbs in Bloom: A Guide to Growing Herbs as Ornamental Plants*. Timber Press 1998 \$34.95 Cloth 0881924547.

Aves, Melanie. *Comfort Colors: Palettes For Liveable Rooms*. Rockport 1999 \$29.99 Paper 1564964647.

Fuse, Tomoko. *Fabulous Origami Boxes*. Japan Publications 1998 \$17.00 Paper 0870409786.

Bishop, Jan Galen. *Fitness through Aerobics*. Allyn & Bacon 1999 \$24.26 Paper 0205285848.

Sparano, Vin T. *Complete Outdoors Encyclopedia*. St. Martin's/Trade 1998 \$39.95 Cloth 0312191901.

McClure, Susan, 1957- *Free-Spirited Garden: Gorgeous Gardens that Flourish Naturally*. Chronicle 1999 \$18.95 Paper 0811821129.

Woodtor, Dee Parmer. *Finding a Place Called Home: A Guide to African-American Genealogy and Historical Identity*. Random House 1999 \$24.50 Cloth 037540595x.

Cohen, Paul H. *America's Scientific Treasures: A Travel Companion*. Amer Chemical Soc 1998 \$24.95 Paper 0841234442.

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views of Web-based products and to assist those who need to make informed decisions about which products to license or even to examine. *The Advisor* is published in both print and online formats. The print edition will appear quarterly in July, October, January, and April. Subscribers to TCA will automatically receive access to the electronic edition and database, available at <www.charlestonco.com>. We expect to review over fifty products annually and will also feature "in the field" reports and editorial commentary. The editorial above refers to Rebecca Lenzini (President, Publisher, and Editor-in-Chief, George Machovec (Managing Editor), and Katina Strauch (Chair of the Board), *The Charleston Advisor*.

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