September 2001

Bet You Missed It-Birds and Cell Phones

Pamela M. Rose

Health Sciences Library, University at Buffalo, pmrose@acsu.buffalo.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg>

Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Rose, Pamela M. (2001) "Bet You Missed It-Birds and Cell Phones," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 13: Iss. 4, Article 34.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.3624>

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.

Bet You Missed It

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

Column Editor: **Pamela M. Rose**, M.L.S. (Web Services & Library Promotion Coordinator, Health Sciences Library, Univisity at Buffalo, 3435 Main St., Buffalo, NY 14214-3002; Phone: 716-829-2408 x129; Fax: 716-829-2211) <pmrose@acsu.buffalo.edu> wings.buffalo.edu/~pmrose

PRESIDENTIAL POISON

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

How toxic was “blue mass,” a common prescription for hypochondriasis in the 19th century? His interest piqued by a historical note that **Abraham Lincoln** “ate blue mass” prior to his election, **Norbert Hirschhorn** and colleagues recreated the pills from an old recipe calling for mercury, liquorice root, rose water, honey, sugar and dead rose petals. Their conclusion: **Lincoln’s** early mood swings, rage outbursts, insomnia and forgetfulness were due to his ingesting about 9000 times the “safe” level of mercury.

See — “Lincoln’s Blues” in Random Samples section edited by **Constance Holden**, *Science*, p. 601, Jul. 27, 2001.

POSTDOC SAID, PROFESSOR SAID

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

In a sweeping landmark reversal, the U.S. Appeals Court has paved the way for junior staff members and faculty to reap a share of financial and career rewards when they are part of a university invention and discovery process. The court granted **Joany Chou**, former postdoc at the **University of Chicago**, the right to assert her interest and seek legal redress. The judges also admonished senior faculty to keep junior colleagues fully informed of intellectual property claims they file. **Chou’s** mentor **Bernard Roizman**, who filed a patent for the variant herpes virus gene **Chou** claims she discovered, denies the allegations. The University has chosen to prepare for a trial rather than appeal at this point.

See — **Eliot Marshall**, “Appeals Court Clears Way for Academic Suits,” in *Science*, p.411, Jul. 20, 2001.

CELL BIRDS

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

Australia’s six “mimic birds” that imitate sounds in nature have a new addition to their repertoire — the electronic tweeting of mobile phones. Generally, the males imitate the sound of cell phones as part of their mating rituals. Females apparently know the difference between their potential mate’s tweets and an actual cell phone!

See — “Songs of Civilization” in Random Samples section edited by **Constance Holden**, *Science*, p. 45, Jul. 6, 2001.

VIOLENCE, SEX, CHILDREN & ANIMALS

by **Bruce Strauch** (the Citadel)

The Dunn *Daily Record* has the highest market penetration of any newspaper in the US of A (112%) meaning some folks in the town of 14,000 are buying multiple copies. Downhome news is the key. Local driver hits black bear with truck is front page; major Raleigh plane crash in a back section. And names, names, names — featuring the doings of anybody and everybody.

Other rivals for market penetration like the Hastings, Neb., *Tribune* prints snapshots that readers send in. *The Caledonian Record* in St. Johnsbury, Vt. features homeless cats and dogs.

See — **Patricia Callahan**, “Practically Everybody in Dunn, NC, Reads The Daily Newspaper” in *Wall Street Journal*, p. 1, Aug. 10, 2001.

CORNELL WOOS AND WINS

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

The architect of the **Los Alamos Electronic Preprint Archive**, **Paul Ginsparg**, is moving his creation to **Cornell University** in Ithaca, N.Y., where he has accepted a tenured position in computer science and physics. **Cornell** hopes the move will further their goal to establish a world-class center for research in information science. The archive will become a “special collection” in the new **Faculty of Computing and Information**, where library staff will assume the day-to-day administration of the archive. **Ginsparg** will then have more time to explore new directions for the archive, and to expand the preprint culture to other fields, particularly bialy.

See — **Mark Sincell**, “A Man and His Archive Seek Greener Pastures,” in *Science*, p.419, Jul. 20, 2001.

SLIPPERY SLOPE

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

BioMed Central, a free online publisher, is considering a sliding scale for author charges (up to \$500) to post papers on their Web site. Although the idea is backed by the **Public Library of Science**, it’s drawing mixed reviews from scientists who argue that a fee will drive researchers to submit their best work to no-charge commercial journals and drive up costs.

See — “Money Talk” in ScienceScope section (contributors **Jefrey Mervis** & **David Malakoff**) in *Science*, p. 27, Jul. 6, 2001.

POOREST TO PROFIT

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

Under a **World Health Organization** initiative, the six largest commercial journal publishers (**Reed-Elsevier**, **Wolters Kluwer**, **Blackwell**, **Harcourt General**, **Springer-Verlag**, and **John Wiley**) have agreed to allow **WHO** to construct an Internet portal. Universities, labs, and health agencies in nearly 100 approved nations will have unlimited access to over 80% of the top 1240 biomedical journals. Initially, the world’s poorest nations will participate; later **WHO** hopes to arrange deeply discounted subscriptions for additional nations.

See — **David Malakoff**, “Journals Offered Free to Poorest Nations” in *Science*, p. 189, Jul. 13, 2001.

CRITIQUE CONCERN

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

The **White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB)** proposes allowing citizens to critique data disbursed by government agencies. The guidelines, which would require agencies to set up mechanisms for citizen review, alarm researchers who worry that this is an open invitation to industry to trash the work of scientists.

See — “Data-Quality Jitters,” in ScienceScope section (contributors **Jocelyn Kaiser**, **Andrew Lawler**, **Michael Balter**, **Jon Cohen**, **Eliot Marshall**) in *Science*, p. 191, Jul. 13, 2001.

FEIST IS EVER WITH US

by **Bruce Strauch** (the Citadel)

Legendary **Algonquin Roundtable** wit **Dorothy Parker** kept a bunch of poems out of print because she thought they stunk. **Stuart Silverstein** has edited the "lost poems" and offered them to **Penguin** which offered him \$2,000. He rejected this and sold to **Scribner**. **Penguin** then released the *Complete Poems of Parker* which included a previously uncollected section. And **Penguin** pretty freely admits **Silverstein** was the "source."

And so the old *Feist v. Rural Telephone* question rears its head. Mindful of this, **Penguin** changed the order of the poems, but they used identical couplets, titles and punctuation.

Silverstein says his originality lies in the selection of the 122 poems. There were others which he could have used but didn't.

See — **Lawrence Carbel**, "What Fresh Hell Is This?" in *Wall Street Journal*, p. B1, May 4, 2001.

MUSIC GIANT HITS SOUR NOTE

by **Bruce Strauch** (the Citadel)

Highly placed **Bertelsmann** exec **Thomas Middelhoff** is an Internet fanatic who presciently engineered the \$50 million stake in **AOL** and another big chunk of **AOL Europe** that are now worth billions. A meeting with **Stanford University** students convinced him of the awesome presence of **Napster** and ultimately to an alliance to lend the bucks for a legit service. **Napster** would create the service and **Bertelsmann** would license music to it. This angered many artists plus it was just prior to the recent appeals court decision ordering **Napster** to rid its service of pirated music.

Bertelsmann and **Napster** want to offer the rest of the music industry a set fee rather than a percentage. The industry biggies, struggling to develop their own subscription services, refused.

Middelhoff thinks the obsession with protecting copyrights is denying consumers what they want and leaving the industry with no forward-looking strategy.

See — **Martin Peers**, **William Boston**, "Plugging into the Web is Jarring Experience for Music Industry," in *Wall Street Journal*, p.1, April 12, 2001.

PRONOID—ONE WHO BELIEVES THE UNIVERSE IS A CONSPIRACY ON OUR BEHALF

by **Bruce Strauch** (the Citadel)

John Perry Barlow of the **Grateful Dead** (and of **ATG** interview fame—see v.11#1, 1998) and free cyberspace advocacy fame says **Al Gore** not only didn't invent the Internet, he doesn't understand what it is. The fact that Gore calls it an "information superhighway" shows he is an authoritarian who wants the Net to be "a massive, centrally administered and planned government project."

A strong libertarian, **Barlow** says central governments provide nothing you'd be willing to pay for. And child pornography is just a stalking horse for "a whole raft of truly malign regulations." The "rights of artists" is another one, in that case disguising the dead hand control of the music industry which holds most of the copyrights.

"The more inclined an organization is to live on the fruits of its patent, the less inclined it is to be creative." The **Dead** always gave music away and always saw their sales zoom. Even the worst albums went platinum.

Of particular interest, **Barlow** explains why the feds backed off on the demand to have a key to all encryption. And it's so obvious. The banking world was already using the Net massively. Our government leaks like a sieve. The key to your bank account would have become common knowledge within days.

See — **Spencer Reiss**, "Cyberspace Cowboy," in *The American Spectator*, p.24, Vol. 34, April 3, 2001.

WHEN IS A BOOK AN eBook?

by **Bruce Strauch** (the Citadel)

Kurt Vonnegut, **William Styron** and other luminaries are being brought out in eBook form by **Rosetta Books LLC**. **Random House** is not happy and has called up the lawyers. After all, they have these titles under contract to publish in "book form."

Rosetta says a book is that familiar object—paper pages bound in a cover. **Random House** argues that books are anything that "faithfully reproduces the author's full text in a fashion that allows the text to be read."

An intellectual property law prof at **Columbia** says if eBooks were foreseeable at the time of contracting, then the author must have specifically held back eBook rights. [Which seems like a non-issue to your astute **ATG** law advisor. "Slaughterhouse-Five" is one of the books in question.]

Anyhow, agents are licking their lips over recovering rights and reselling famous books. And clearly, **Random House's** deep-seated fear is it could lose control over its 20,000 backlist titles.

See — **Matthew Rose**, "Definitions Are Key in Publishers' Dispute Over Electronic-Book Rights," in *Wall Street Journal*, p.B1, May 7, 2001.

CLOSURE CRISIS

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

The immediate and noisy outcry at the announced closings of two of the **Smithsonian Institution's** research facilities made public the long-standing problems behind the exhibits and research of one of the world's finest museums and its collections, research, and programs. The **National Zoo Conservation and Research Center (CRC)** and the **Center for Materials Research and Education (SCMRE)** were tagged for the ax as reported in the April 13, 2001 issue of *Science*. Other "Jewels in the Crown" face similar budget and leadership crises: the **Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics (HSCA)**, the **Smithsonian Environmental Research Center (SERC)**, and the **Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute (STRI)**. As the first nonacademic to head the institution, **Smithsonian** secretary **Lawrence M. Small** came in January 2000 as a reformer pledging to put the Smithsonian on a firmer financial footing, define a new mission, and subject activities to more rigorous assessment. **Small's** plans have created great anxiety not only because they have yet to be spelled out in detail, but also because researchers have been left out of the loop of plans to reorganize into "centers of excellence" and because they feel **Small** has been critical of the scientists' work. Given the controversy, **Small** declined to make the details of the reorganization public and while approved by the regents, the final plan will be worked out in conjunction with a blue-ribbon committee, who will also consider a plan drawn up by the scientists themselves. Their work is expected to take at least until the end of this year. The announced closings have been blocked, however, researchers in many areas remain in the dark about their reporting structure and future.

See — **Elizabeth Pennisi**, "Turmoil Behind the Exhibits," in *Science*, pp.194-198, Jul. 13, 2001.

TOOTING THE HORN FOR GROVE

by **Bruce Strauch** (the Citadel)

The New Grove Dictionary of Music gets the royal *New Yorker* treatment. Author describes it as "a magnificent achievement, and, more than that, it is a work of love." — which it has been since **Sir George Grove** launched it in 1889. The author urges "Libraries should think twice before casting it (that 1st ed.) aside" — which is hard to imagine a library doing, but in the age of wholesale destruction of paper, who knows?

Grove, a bridge engineer, was a music fanatic among the first to notice **Franz Schubert**. The latest edition of his enterprise will include a constantly updated online version and much expanded coverage of 20th century music.

The **Zywny** of the article title was **Chopin's** piano teacher.

See — **Alex Ross**, "ABBA to ZYWNY" in *New Yorker*, pp. 82-86, July 9, 2001.

HG BROWN IS A HARD ACT TO FOLLOW

by **Bruce Strauch** (the Citadel)

A rash of firings and personnel shake-ups at venerable title womens' magazines is putting the spotlight on the deadly competition for readership. Ever since **Helen Gurley Brown** slapped that cleavage on the front of *Cosmo*, every zine felt it had to follow suit. Now even *Redbook* is trumpeting sex on its cover. Which makes it hard for the buyer to know what to pick off the rack.

Then along came single theme niche magazines — including the ultimate Condé Nast product *Lucky* which is dedicated exclusively to *shopping* — to dangerously crowd the field.

Meanwhile other income sources are bleak. Wholesalers are cutting distribution of weak titles, attorneys general are posturing about the sweepstakes, and ad revenues are sliding towards the toilet.

See — **Matthew Rose**, "What Do Women Want — to Read?" in *Wall Street Journal*, p. B1, June 4, 2001.

International Dateline —

News from South Africa and Important Developments in the UK over the Reed/Harcourt Merger

by **Martin White** (Managing Director, Intranet Focus Ltd., 12 Allcard Close, Horsham, West Sussex, RH12 5AJ; Phone: +44 1403 267030) <martin.white@intranetfocus.com>
www.intranetfocus.com

Please Note: British spelling has been retained. — KS

I suspect that most of us have an ambivalent view of conferences. Although in theory they represent an opportunity to learn and to network, all too often the papers are not of a consistent quality, or the organisation was notable for its absences. I am therefore pleased to be able to report that in June I attended a conference which for me set a new benchmark in quality. The papers were uniformly excellent, the time-keeping was within five minutes of the due time for the entire conference, the catering was very good, the workshops were well attended, all the technology worked and all the 320 delegates came prepared to network. In addition, the organisers had laid on a partial solar eclipse!

You might assume that such a conference probably took place in Germany, or maybe the UK, but in fact this was the 6th **South African Online Information Meeting**, presented by the **South African Online User Group** (www.saoug.org.za) and held at **Caesars Convention Centre**, Johannesburg, on 20-21 June. I had been invited by **SAOUG** to present a workshop on corporate portals and give a keynote paper on technology trends. The **SAOUG** had joined forces with the **Special Libraries and Information Services Group** and the **Organisation of South African Law Libraries**, and the result was a programme of some 25 papers which covered the broadest possible spectrum of online informa-

tion access and delivery in South Africa.

Listening to the papers, and talking to the delegates and exhibitors, I gained something of the complexity of the social, political, educational and economic factors in South Africa. One paper in particular brought home to me the problems that librarians and information managers face in South Africa. **Di Kruger** is the Librarian of the **Rand Merchant Bank**, and one of her staff wished to work on a telecommute basis, continuing to provide research services from her home some ten hours drive from Johannesburg. This would involve providing an ISDN connection, and to cut a long story short the telephone charges for the first month were 12,000 Rand. In straight currency terms this is around \$1400, but you need to multiply this cost by a factor of perhaps 3 to translate the cost into US real cost terms! Although the telecommunications cost was able to be reduced in subsequent months it was still a very significant factor and had to be taken into account in assessing the viability of the exercise. Terrestrial telecommunications are still in the hands of **South African Telkom**, which has a monopoly, and the high cost of telephone calls has a very significant impact on all aspects of online searching.

Another impact of the weakness of the Rand against the US\$ is the high price of online service subscriptions and e-journals. Some companies, notably **Dialog**, have not imposed a monthly minimum rate for South Africa, as this was proving a deterrent to subscribers. In doing so the level of use rose, as it provided easier to justify search

costs against an individual project or requirement than have to commit to a minimum in advance without any reliable measure of use. Other companies seem to be taking a less flexible route, and there seemed to be some annoyance with the approach of **LexisNexis**, which is a key database for South Africa because of the way in which its laws often use UK law as a precedent. However, the attitude of most of the exhibitors I spoke to was that deals have to be done, and it is better to gain some business and a satisfied customer than try to do a deal by the book.

Which leads me neatly onto copyright. The current copyright law dates back to 1978 and was modelled around the UK Copyright Act. A new Act is now in preparation and there is real concern on the part of the library community that the Act will be biased towards the interests of media owners. **Denise Nicholson** <Nicholson.d@library.wits.ac.za> of **Wits University** has put an enormous amount of personal effort into lobbying on behalf of the library community, and I know would appreciate support and advice from copyright experts in the USA. This is clearly an important issue in South Africa, and **SAOUG** had invited **Professor Charles Oppenheim**, **Loughborough University**, UK, and an expert on legal issues in information work, to give a keynote. (Incidentally the 4th edition of **Professor Oppenheim's** book on *The Legal and Regulatory Environment for Electronic Information* has just been

continued on page 87