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Bet You Missed It

Pamela M. Rose

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

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Bet You Missed It

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

Column Editor: **Pamela M. Rose** (Web Services and Library Promotion Coordinator, Health Sciences Library, University at Buffalo) <pmrose@acsu.buffalo.edu> <http://www.acsu.buffalo.edu/~pmrose>

Editor's note: Welcome to Pamela Rose who is now editing Bet You Missed It and thanks to Sarah Tusa who worked long and hard on BYMI for many years. Thanks to both of these wonderful, hard-working women!—KS

My Chart Ate my Card! by Pamela M. Rose (SUNY at Buffalo)

Smart Cards may not be just for dollars. A team at **Washington University** has combined Smart Cards with patient records mounted on a Web server with access via the card and a private

PIN. Convenient, but control may prove difficult. See—"Patient Charts on the Web?," Random Samples section edited by **Jocelyn Kaiser**, in *Science*, p.755, Feb. 5, 1999.

Forgotten But Not Gone by Twyla Racz (Eastern Michigan University)

Why did **David McDowell**, whose firm published his critically acclaimed and award-winning book and who was an excellent editor, become a forgotten man in the publishing world?

In this article the author explains the reasons. See—**Matthew Guinn**, "David McDowell: Forgotten Man of Letters," *Publishing Research Quarterly*, vol. 14 (1) (Spring 1998), p. 6-20.

When a Reading Room Was A Reading Room by Bruce Strauch (the Citadel)

The Beaux Arts Main Reading Room of the **NY Public Library** has been updated with technology, but the grandeur remains. Vast. Monumental. Sumptuous. A cathedral without dogma. See—**Robert Polidori**, "Room to Think," *The New Yorker*, p. 68, Oct. 5, 1998.

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Cold Spring Express Ph.Ds

by Pamela M. Rose (SUNY at Buffalo)

Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory (CSH) has been educating

people since it was founded as a research field station a century ago. Now, New York State has accredited CSH to open a School of Biological Sciences with 5 enrolled Ph. D. candidates in Fall 1999. CSH hopes to raise a sufficient endowment to free students from outside funding

pressures, to shorten the standard 7 years it takes to get a Ph.D. to 4.5 years, and to acquire a more direct role in shaping the education of students on campus. See—Eliot Marshall, "Cold Spring Harbor to Offer Own Degrees," in *Science*, p.1240-41, Nov. 13, 1998.

Internet Wins!

by Pamela M. Rose (SUNY at Buffalo)

The costs of print versus electronic publishing are dictating preference for the latter. A Gallup poll commissioned by the National Science Foundation found 53% of 1032 adults surveyed use the Internet. As a result, NSF de-

cided to replace a bimonthly lay publication with a cybermagazine. See—"NSF Picks Up on Rising Computer Usage," Random Samples Section edited by Constance Holden, in *Science*, p.483, Jan. 22, 1999.

Medical Spell-Check

by Bruce Strauch (the Citadel)

The new field of pharmacogenetics is linking genetics to patient response to drugs. The one-size-fits-all approach leads to millions of bad reactions and over a hundred thousand deaths a year. Genes are strings of molecules in varying combinations of letters. Get a different genetic spelling and the drug ef-

fect is sometimes fatally different. Although the medical industry is slow to change, fear of malpractice litigation will soon change that. A test that predicts the patient's reaction will become necessary defensive medicine.

See—Sharon Bagley, "Screening for Genes," *Newsweek*, p. 66, Feb. 8, 1999.

Head to Head

by Bruce Strauch (the Citadel)

Jonathan Bulkeley who started AOL's British operation is now squaring off against Jeff Bezos, founder of Amazon.com. Bulkeley was hired by Bertelsmann after it bought 50% of Barnesandnoble.com. Bulkeley says he has a million more titles than Amazon and better access to out-of-print books. Most amusing, Bulkeley recalls

when he was working for AOL in 1994 in Virginia. They phoned Barnes & Noble to offer to set up an online bookstore. The call was never returned. The same year, Amazon was up and running. See—Elisabeth Bumiller, "Online Booksellers: A Tale of Two CEO's," *The New York Times*, Dec. 9, 1998

Discombobulated over Crosstabulation?

by Pamela M. Rose (SUNY at Buffalo)

Data Desk to the rescue! A basic statistical analysis and plotting package, Data Desk has grown from an educational accessory to a useful research tool which allows rapid calculations in an easy-to-understand manner, and applies "what if" analysis so researchers can see how small,

defined changes in data can alter results. And, once the data is analyzed, the program will create slide shows! Available from Data Description, Inc., Ithaca, NY, www.datadesk.com. See—Brian R. Shmaefsky, "Statistical Buddy" in *Science*, p. 2198, Dec. 18, 1998.

Those Little Thingummies That Shake Up the World

by Bruce Strauch (the Citadel)

In 1973, the Universal Product Code—now known as the bar code—was born in San Francisco. In a time of high-inflation, supermarket net margins were being badly squeezed by the simple labor costs of check-out and bagging. The answer was a laser scannable icon to automate the process. In truth it was born in 1948 when Norman Woodland had the idea while doodling in the sand on a beach and thinking about Morse code. With fat and thin lines, you could do the same thing. He originally designed it as a circle so it could be read from any direction. Like most overnight successes, it didn't become operational until 1972, and then as a rectangle which could be greatly reduced to take up less "real estate" on product items and still be read omnidirectionally. 1973 was the year the Uniform Code

Council, a nonprofit corporation began assigning all those familiar five-digit sequences to individual manufacturers. And finally in 1974, the first pack of chewing gum went past the register.

Initial consumer reaction was blah until Phil Donahue whipped an audience into an outrage that prices were being concealed from them. This led to national protests countered by heavy supermarket industry lobbying with Congress. Like most American frenzies, it died of boredom and production marched on. Automated check-out began in its turn pay-at-the-pump gas, ATM machines and Internet billings, all picking up the pace of commerce in our mass retail climate. See—Ed Leibowitz, "Bar Codes: reading between the lines", *Smithsonian*, p. 130, Feb. 1999.

Patients Need Privacy

by Pamela M. Rose (SUNY at Buffalo)

The Icelandic legislature has granted deCODE Genetics in Reykjavik exclusive rights to establish and commercially exploit a nationwide database containing health records of the country's entire homogeneous population. The government believes the database will improve the country's health care system. Critics charge the bill violates basic ethical prin-

ciples because records can be deposited without consent, and linkages to existing genealogical and genetic information makes it too easy to identify individual patients and gain access to sensitive data. Critics will pursue ways to block implementation. See—Martin Enserink, "Iceland Oks Private Health Databank" in *Science*, p.13, Jan. 1, 1999.

Battle of the Titans

by Bruce Strauch (the Citadel)

With Amazon.com holding a big lead in the market, Barnes & Noble has agreed to weave together online products and services with Microsoft. But, a stock analyst notes: "This isn't a zero-

sum game. The market is growing so quickly that Barnes & Noble's gain isn't necessarily Amazon's loss. See—*The New York Times*, Tues., Dec. 8, 1998.

DVD Wins Space Race

by Twyla Racz (Eastern Michigan University)

In 1997 the Library of Congress to commemorate the 100th anniversary of its special collections published an art book *Eyes of the Nation: A Visual History of the United States*. But both the book and subsequent CD-ROM were inadequate to fully present

LC's special collections. Thus a new DVD-ROM version available March 1999 will be integrated with the Library's Web site. See—Daniel Radosh, "Seeing America With New Eyes", *Civilization*, vol. 6 (1) (February/March 1999), p. 51-57

The Ghost of Smoot-Hawley Gibbers & Groans by Bruce Strauch (the Citadel)

The worlds biggest traders—U.S. and Canada with a \$1 billion swap in goods daily—are on the edge of a trade war. A bill is before the Canadian Parliament designed to protect Canadian publishing and TV from having their advertising dollars sucked away by foreign publications. It would prohibit foreign publishers

selling advertising to Canadian concerns that was aimed primarily at the Canadian market. The U.S. has threatened a tariff war. See—**John Urquhart**, “U.S. Threatens Canada Trade Sanctions In Bid to Stop Magazine-Advertising Bill,” *The Wall Street Journal*, p.B8, Feb. 10, 1999.

Blown Smoke Causes Hearing Loss — Not! by Bruce Strauch (the Citadel)

Hudson Institute fellow **Michael Fumento** lights into *JAMA*, *Science*, the *New England Journal of Medicine* and *Nature* for publishing politically tainted medical studies. He cites cases of recall bias, data ignored because inconvenient and studies with bizarre methodology that could never be replicated. He’s particu-

larly exercised over studies that provoke expensive EPA regulations—the study is debunked—but the regulations remain. See—**Michael Fumento**, “Medical Journals Give New Meaning to ‘Political Science,’” *The Wall Street Journal*, p. A18, Jan. 21, 1999.

Internet Shell Game by Bruce Strauch (the Citadel)

Convicted swindler **David Korem** swears he rules a country called Melchizedek, named after an unjustly accused king in the Bible. It’s two islands in the Pacific although he has never visited them and many dispute their existence. He has given diplomatic recognition to Kosovo and declared war on France. Korem

lives in California where he might just be one more crank except he’s been granting charters to banks to operate in his utterly unregulated kingdom. What will happen next has fraud investigators interested. See—**Bruce Knecht**, “A ‘Nation’ in Cyberspace Draws Fire From Authorities,” *The Wall Street Journal*, p.B1, Feb. 9, 1999.

Origin of Loose Leaf Publishing

The invention of loose leaf publishing resulted from the publication of a book with an incorrect chapter. Unable to afford a reprint, the newly-established book publisher, Prentice-Hall, reduced the incorrect book to sheet, replaced the incorrect chapter in each and sold the loose-paged book in a ring binder. Today, the practice of loose leaf publishing is in wide use in the fields of medicine, scientific research, and business.

— excerpted from Nat Bodian’s

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And Battle is Joined by Bruce Strauch (the Citadel)

Under fire for admitting it will accept publisher money to endorse books, **Amazon.com** announced it would reveal all listings underwritten by publishers. Amazon saw the money as a way to reduce book prices, but critics charged it would undermine their reputation as champions of small books. And, Amazon

has expanded its refund policy. It will accept returns “even if you ripped out the pages because you thought the book was so bad.”

See—**George Anders**, “Amazon.com Inc. To Tell Customers Of Publisher Fees,” *The Wall Street Journal*, p.B8, Feb. 10, 1999.

Copyright: Whose Ox is Gored? by Bruce Strauch (the Citadel)

The **Copyright Term Extension Act** extended existing copyrights for twenty years, allegedly to square our law with the EU. Disney led the lobbying for this and retains rights in Mickey, Goofy et al and thus billions in revenues. **Epstein**, a law prof at the **U of Chicago** argues that this is a taking of property by government, that public domain rights

have been taken from Americans without compensation as required by the Constitution. Along with this, restaurants, shops and bars have been exempted from paying fees for the right to broadcast copyrighted music. See—**Richard Epstein**, “Congress’s Copyright Giveaway,” *The Wall Street Journal*, Dec. 21, 1998.

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