

September 1992

From Your Guest Editor

Thomas Gilson
College of Charleston, gilsont@cofc.edu

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

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

Recommended Citation

Gilson, Thomas (1992) "From Your Guest Editor," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 4: Iss. 4, Article 32.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.3787>

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.



From Your Guest Editor:

A lot has changed since the first reference publishing issue of *ATG* rolled off the presses in September of 1997. But fortunately, we have been able to keep pace. Fran Wilkinson and Linda Lewis (see p. 1) always manage to focus on the big changes in their annual keynote columns. This year's column is no exception. Fran and Linda explore the growing movement toward electronic publication of reference works. They sum up this trend with two brief, but provocative questions. When they started these columns five years ago, the question was: "Do we want it in electronic format in addition to print?" But now, they note the question is reversed. Librarians ask: "Do we want it in print, in addition to the electronic format?"

In interviews with five librarians from varied perspectives including reference, collection development and administration, this year's column offers a number of interesting observations. These five librarians were asked to address the impact on libraries and library users of new, electronic online packages that include several reference tools, encyclopedias, and dictionaries. Their responses are revealing. Print still has a place, but the electronic versions may be gaining the upper hand.

Of course reference publishers are doing their bit to feed this trend. Publishing of more and more large sets online, not to mention the bundling of shorter reference works into

searchable databases, contributes to the change. A separate interview with Sean Pidgeon of the Nature Publishing Group (see p. 60) adds weight to this observation. In fact, Sean openly questions the long-term future of large print reference sets by pointing out that the 20-volume *Encyclopedia of Life Sciences* was originally planned as an online-only product, and that the Nature Publishing Group sees the online version of *ELS* as the primary product. It will carry on being updated and enhanced, while in all likelihood, the first edition of the print version is the last.

In his article, "Aggregation, Integration and the Library Without Walls," (see p. 26) Adam Hodgkin focuses on the bundling of shorter reference works. Adam's article is a nuts and bolts discussion of the pros and cons for users and publishers of aggregated reference works in a searchable database. He writes from experience and his observations are challenging and insightful, raising questions, as well as answering them.


In keeping with the overall theme of trends toward the electronic, Steve McKinzie and Jonathan D. Lauer offer their observations on the impact of virtual reference services on collection development. As most of you know, virtual reference service is getting a lot of attention in the library community. Some proponents claim it is a panacea that will remedy the troubling statistics showing a drop in reference use in our libraries. But Steve and Jonathan have their doubts. They argue in "Digital Reference: A New Library Paradigm

or the Emperor's New Clothes" (see p. 34) that, while virtual reference has its place, it will not replace traditional services, nor revolutionize traditional reference collection development.

On a broader but equally compelling note, we have an interview with David Levinson and Karen Christensen of the Berkshire Publishing Group. They, and their company, occupy a distinct and unique niche in reference publishing. David and Karen describe Berkshire as "reference publishing's equivalent of an independent film company." They are content providers who "come up with the concept, evaluate the competition, make the deal with the publisher, hire the creative talent, direct the content development process, and deliver a clean copy to the publisher." In short, they focus on the fun parts of reference publishing (see p. 63).

For those of you who thought that CD-ROM publishing was dead, Burton Callicott detects a faint pulse in his review of the CD version of the *OED* (see p. 73). Burton points out that a standalone CD of a high quality work still has a place in some reference collections. And I add my two cents on this business of online publishing with a review of the Web version of the *Encyclopedia of Life Sciences*.

As always, we have done our best to provide an interesting snapshot of where reference publishing stands at the moment. And of course, this issue contains the standard *ATG* features that our readers have come to expect, and we hope, depend upon. Enjoy!

Tom Gilson, Guest Ed. 

From Your (hotelier) Editor:

I now know what my occupation can be when I retire. I can run a hotel for college-age types. I am getting a lot of experience. This summer has been fun. Having a college-age teenager home for the summer has consisted of cooking and cleaning, clothes washing, cooking and cleaning, dish washing, cooking and cleaning, worrying, cooking and cleaning never-ending! It's a change of roles: no more the disciplinarian. Rising sophomore Ileana is an adult and she follows her own rules. She has been home with countless friends and they all want mainly to be fed and put up for the night. And this past weekend, just when I thought I'd have the time off to work on *Against the Grain*, guess what! In walked Ileana with two girlfriends! And what did they want?

Food. Clothes washed. A place to sleep for the night. More cooking and cleaning.

But, valiantly, I have finished this issue of *Against the Grain* with lots of help from all of you plus the inimitable Tom Gilson, who is still editing *From the Reference Desk* as well as guest editing the September issue, while he is also Vice President of the South Carolina Library Association! Whew! This issue is full, full, full of great information. Fran Wilkinson and Linda Lewis deliver their annual installment of interviews with publishers, librarians, end users, and vendors about collection development and print versus electronic resources. We also have an article by Adam Hodgkin on *Aggregation, Integration and The Library Without Walls*, an article/

opinion piece from Steve McKinzie and Jonathan D. Lauer on *Digital Reference* and Nick Vincelli provides *An Order*

Librarian's Reflections on Online Auction Services Orders. A couple of new columns to note, we have a new column/op ed, *IMHBCO (In My Humble But Correct Opinion)* by Rick Anderson and the new *Talk of the Trade* by Barry Fast.

Well, gotta run. There is cooking and cleaning to do, sheets to be washed. See y'all in November!

Yr. Ed. 



AGAINST THE GRAIN DEADLINES VOLUME 14 — 2002/2003

Event	Issue	Ad Reservation	Camera-Ready
Charleston Conference	Nov. 2002	08/21/02	09/11/02
ALA Midwinter	Dec. 02/Jan. 03	11/13/02	12/04/02