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ATG Interviews John Kennerly

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the library as a place and the need for librarians are diminished. The idea that electronic information makes the role of librarians more vital is just whistling past the graveyard. At our small liberal arts college the majority of students and faculty seldom, if ever, visit the library.

They search, download and print the materials they need from dorm rooms, computer labs, offices, and homes. There is little interaction with a librarian. Is this limiting them in finding information they need? Yes, but apparently they don't care. After I presented a class on using the library, a professor told her students "I never fool with anything that isn't full text online." What kind of message is this sending?

This mind set is the result of what **Thomas Mann** and others call the **Principle of Least Effort**. Numerous studies have shown that information seekers, even "serious" scholars, will settle for less valuable information if more valuable information requires more effort to find. This is especially true of students. This "scholarship in haste" is poor to mediocre scholarship. Immediacy and convenience have taken the place of the willingness to engage in the laborious and time-consuming work that solid research and scholarship require.

Perhaps as troubling is that technology diminishes our ability to choose books and journals that support the mission of the library. It's all presented in take it or leave it packages that contain materials we don't particularly want and may not contain things we need. Those items we don't want or need take scarce funds that could be used to purchase more traditional materials. Moreover, electronic sources are ephemeral. Publishers can pull a journal or full text coverage at any time. It's risky business to cancel print subscriptions on the basis of online availability. What's here today is gone tomorrow. And, of course, there are the problems of archiving, of systems failure, and interruptions of electric service.

You've heard most of these arguments before, but apparently they've fallen on deaf ears. Some turn to electronic sources out of preference, convenience, and/or the desire to be viewed as the type who is forward thinking and embraces the next new thing. Others do so out of economic necessity. But we must not let technology beguile us, become the center of our existence, or drive our programs and thinking.

I'm not naïve about the impact of technology, and I'm cognizant of the good it does. Too, I understand that it's not going away, and it shouldn't. But with all due respect to my colleague **Allison**, we must make our decisions based on reason and prudence rather than emotional responses to the perceived unfairness and arrogance of publishers. 🐼

ATG Interviews John Kennerly

Library Director, McCain Library, Erskine College and Theological Seminary

by **Katina Strauch** (Editor, *Against the Grain*) <strauchk@earthlink.net>

ATG: Tell us about Erskine College Library and Theological Seminary. When was it founded? How many students go here? What types of degrees are offered?

JK: Erskine College (EC) was founded by the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church in 1839. Prior to this time the church had established in Due West, SC, an academy for men in 1835. Erskine Theological Seminary (ETS) was founded in 1837. EC offers the Bachelor of Arts and the Bachelor of Science degrees. ETS offers the Doctor of Ministry degree as well as six masters level degrees: Master of Divinity, M.A. in Christian Education, M.A. in Counseling Ministry, M.A. in Pastoral Ministry, M.A. in Theological Studies, and Master of Church Music. The combined FTE enrollment for the fall of 2001 was 777 (582, College/195, Seminary).

ATG: How long have you been at Erskine? Where did you come from? How did you end up in Due West?

JK: I have been at Erskine for seven years. I came to Erskine directly from graduate school after earning my masters degree in Library and Information Science from the University of South Carolina. I knew that I wanted to work in an academic library setting, preferably remaining in the Carolinas. When I saw an opening for an interlibrary loan/cataloging librarian at a small, private, liberal arts college in upstate SC, I was intrigued. Once I visited Due West and the Erskine campus, I knew this was where I wanted to begin my career as a librarian. My wife and I moved from North Charleston to the nearby city of Greenwood in 1995.

ATG: How old is the library? It looks as if it's been added to.

JK: McCain Library was built in 1949 as the library for the College. With only 9,000 square feet of space, the building housed approximately 28,000 volumes. In 1973, an addition was made, more than doubling library space to 22,500 square feet and creating the facility that you see today.

ATG: How many staff do you have? What kind of budget for materials? I know that there used to be two libraries: one for the theological seminary and one for the college. When were these combined?

JK: McCain Library has a FTE staff of seven, including three professional librarians, three full-time non-professional staff members, and two part-time non-professional staff members. In addition, the library employs 15-20 student workers during the school year and receives assistance from three volunteers.

The 2001/02 materials budget was \$165,500 (College and Seminary combined). For 2002/03 we will see a twenty-two percent increase to \$201,800.

McCain Library was constructed for use by the College in 1949. When the expansion occurred in 1973, the Seminary's library was merged with the College's. The library has separate budgets for college and seminary materials, but the collections are housed together.

The first small group of books bought for use by college students were purchased with college funds in 1839. But, apparently, the book-gathering and book-circulating efforts of the literary societies (beginning in the early 1840s) formed the real nucleus of what would become the official college library. The current library is composed of materials from the original **Erskine Library**, the once active **Due West Female College**, the once separate **Euphemian** and **Philomathean** literary societies, and the **Seminary Library**.

ATG: What's the capacity of the library? How many students do you have? What sorts of students are they? Do you give graduate degrees?

JK: The current facility was designed to accommodate 155,000 volumes and to provide seating for 275 people. However, we are under a severe space crunch. Our actual total volume capacity is 247,000 volumes. As a result, space is at a premium. In fact, our seating capacity has been cut back to 200 people. The institution has just approved the renovation of a vacant building on campus — a portion of which has been designated to serve as a library annex. We plan to relocate archive and special collection materials to the library annex once the renovations are complete next fall. The annex will afford the library approximately 5,000 square feet of additional space. This is seen

continued on page 40

John Kennerly Interview
from page 38

as a temporary solution to the space problem until a more permanent solution is approved.

The college student body is composed of about 600 students (headcount) — the vast majority of whom live on campus. The seminary student body (approx. 360 students) is commuter based. Some of those students take courses through the seminary's distance education program.

The seminary, of course, offers graduate degrees, but the college is strictly an undergraduate institution.

ATG: *I know you are a member of DISCUS (Digital Information for South Carolina USers) and the newly formed PASCAL (Partnership of SC Academic Libraries) which gives you consortial access to many electronic resources. Could you tell us about what resources you have access to as well as which ones you would like to have access to?*

JK: Through DISCUS, SC's Virtual Library, Erskine has access to seventeen periodical and reference databases. We were subscribing to InfoTrac prior to the establishment of DISCUS, so this "virtual library" came as a great opportunity for us to redirect a substantial amount of funds to other resources, such as discipline-specific databases.

The SOLINET SC Group Database Project was another initiative that Erskine has been able to participate in. Through this consortial effort, McCain Library provides the FirstSearch databases to Erskine students and faculty as well as other electronic resources. Other purchases through SOLINET have been the ACS Web Editions and BioOne electronic journals as well as the LexisNexis Academic Universe database.

PASCAL takes the opportunity for statewide collaboration to the next level for SC academic institutions. PASCAL is still in its infancy, but there is solid support for its development. I believe we will see excellent opportunities for statewide partnerships and consortial purchases that will enhance the educational experience for students attending colleges and universities in South Carolina.

In addition to our consortial arrangements for access to electronic resources, we independently provide access to the DIALOG family of databases and other specific electronic resources that serve various degree programs. For the business department, for ex-

ample, we provide resources such as *Annual Statement Studies* (CD-ROM), *U.S. Master Tax Guide* online, and the *ValueLine Investment Survey* online. For the ETS department of church history and theology, we provide the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* (TLG) on CD-ROM.

Our next focus for electronic resources will be periodical databases in the areas of history and psychology. *America History and Life*, *Historical Abstracts*, and *PsycINFO* (or *PsycARTICLES*) are the prime candidates. We currently have access to these databases through DIALOG, but we would like to provide them in a way that patrons can use them directly. You may browse the databases that we currently provide by visiting www.erskine.edu/library/dbindex.htm.

ATG: *Are y'all discarding print for electronic resources? How are you deciding what to discard? Do you have any remote storage?*

JK: In some cases, yes. This is primarily in regard to reference sources and periodicals. However, we do attempt to maintain both formats for some sources that are heavily used. Unfortunately, space continues to be a factor that we must consider.

The decision to discard is carried out by the librarians in close consultation with the teaching faculty. We want to provide the best supportive materials and incorporate the most useful methods of access. Sometimes that means providing only the print or only the electronic version. At other times, it means providing both. Our collection development policy does address the issue of discarding and weeding, but I must confess that we need to have a thorough review of how it addresses electronic resources.

We do store some archival materials and gift materials awaiting processing in other locations on campus, but not to the degree that we normally think of with the remote storage facilities that we see being constructed today. Our remote storage consists of a few rooms (one being a vault) on campus where we store materials. I mentioned the library annex that will open soon in a renovated facility on campus. This facility will probably be used to store some low-use materials.

ATG: *Do you serve as a public library for the community? Where is the nearest public library?*

JK: Yes. In many ways McCain Library serves as a public library for the local community. The Associate Reformed Presby-

terian Church maintains the Due West Retirement Center. Many of the Center's residents, as well as other townsfolk, frequent the Erskine Library for recreational reading materials and reference assistance. Students from the local high school make use of the Erskine Library as do a number of homeschooled children. The library also assists numerous genealogical researchers from across the country with ties to the College, the Seminary, the ARP Church, and Abbeville County, SC. The nearest public library is four miles from Due West in the town of Donalds, SC. This is a small branch of the Abbeville-Greenwood Regional Library serving both Greenwood and Abbeville counties. The main branch is in Greenwood.

ATG: *You were telling me about your capstone classes and training of students to evaluate resources. Can you tell us about this?*

JK: All incoming college freshmen are enrolled in Erskine Seminar 101, a first-semester, multidisciplinary introduction to life as a college student. The librarians have been active participants in the majority of these courses since the program's inception a couple of years ago. Library instruction sessions have been integrated into these courses that takes the students beyond the general library orientation session they receive their first week on campus. The sessions are either tailored for specific course projects or serve as an overall introduction to research methods. In both cases, students are introduced to the aspects of information literacy. Both the freshman orientation sessions and the Erskine Seminar courses provide the library with an opportunity to evaluate patterns in the use of resources at the beginning of the college career.

On the other side of spectrum, the librarians also conduct library instruction sessions for upper-level courses. Here, we are able to evaluate resource use during the junior and senior year. The biology, chemistry, and history departments, for example offer Senior Seminars (400 level) that incorporate research methods. As the librarians work with these seniors as a group and individually on their projects, we are able to see how much they have grown in their understanding and use of library resources. Assessments such as these have shown us areas of the book and periodical collections that were weak and needed development. We have also discovered which electronic databases are most frequented. In some cases, we have identified discipline-specific databases that would be useful if the funding were available.

ATG: *Tell us about your special collections. I was intrigued by the Edgar Long English room (named for a professor who taught for 40 years at Erskine) and the children's gift collection that you have ready to process in that room.*

continued on page 41

CONTACT INFORMATION

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John Kennerly Interview
from page 40

JK: In the early 1990's the library received a gift of children's books from **Dr. Wofford Baldwin**, a local doctor and supporter of **Erskine College**. The collection consists of approximately 7,800 volumes of children's literature with a number of volumes dating back to the 19th century. This collection is currently housed in the Edgar Long English Room located in the library. The "Long Room" is currently closed to the public, and the **Baldwin Children's Book** collection is waiting to be processed and added to the online catalog. This is a rich resource for the study of children's literature and is much in need of better access. Lack of staffing and funding has prevented opening the collection to the public.

The majority of the library's special collection items are unique 18th and 19th century volumes or volumes of local significance. Many of these items are used by genealogical researchers with ties to the institution, the **ARP Church**, or the local geographical area. One significant component of the library's

genealogical collection is the **Miller Family History Center**. Funded by the Miller family, the **Family History Center** consists primarily of electronic resources such as census data, marriage records, death records, and family histories. Other resources associated with the Center include reference books and family papers. The **Center** is housed in **McCain Library**.

The library plans to move archives and special collections to the planned remote library annex once renovations are complete.

ATG: *What do you do for fun? Tell us about your family and hobbies.*

JK: I enjoy music. The time I spend as a guitarist, songwriter, and performer are more of a passion than a hobby. I got that from my mom. I also enjoy gardening and spending time outdoors. You can blame my father for that one. I must say, however, that my greatest pastime is spending time with my wife, **Heather**, and our three-and-a-half year old twin daughters, **Autumn** and **Bridget**. You could say that I am severely outnumbered at home, but, then again, who cares when you're surrounded by such beautiful women? 🐼

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, Univisity at Buffalo; Phone: 716-829-2408 x129; Fax: 716-829-2211) <pmrose@acsu.buffalo.edu> wings.buffalo.edu/~pmrose

A LITTLE COMPETITION COULD GO A LONG WAY By Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Despite the legal kibosh put to **Napster**, music swapping goes on unabated. Hollywood is using all its lobbying muscle to get protection technology in PCs, but what the industry really lacks is a will to compete. Hard core music thieves will never alter their ways. But run-of-the-mill **Joe Doaks** will part with his money if the product is right. In a fragmented music swapping world, one-stop recording is a plus. And the music companies have all the product.

See — **Thomas Weber**, "Record Companies Should Try Competing For Music Fans' Loyalty," *Wall Street Journal*, p.B1, April 15, 2002.

RETURNS JUST GET MORE NIGHTMARISH by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Unknown **Pennie Clark Ianniciello** is the discounted book buyer for **Costco's** massive stores and along with whoever does the job for **Walmart** and **Sam's Club** is a big power in the publishing industry. The Clubs take up to 25% of the first printing and are consulted on what should be published. But — and there would be a but — the Clubs don't take many titles and will ditch a title in a week if it isn't selling. That takes a whole bunch of books — often by best-selling authors — off the market as the returns take two months to get back to the publisher.

And small bookstores, enjoy the spectacle. **Barnes & Noble** is going ballistic over the better discounts the clubs receive.

See — **Matthew Rose**, "Selling Books Like Dog Food Gives A Buyer Real Bite," *Wall Street Journal*, p.A1, April 10, 2002.

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