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Books Are Us

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And They Were There from page 81

After a long search, which reveals that **Mr. Abram** has been giving a talk with this title at least since 1999, I found the slides at <http://www.mmltd.com/presentations.aap.pdf>.

OK — we are in for paradigm shift but to what sort of paradigm? Publisher conferences now have an obligatory session on alternative models. There was a balanced panel on whether alternative models add greater value to scientific publishing, tightly chaired by **Nigel Fletcher-Jones** of **Nature America Inc.** One end of the spectrum was represented by **Pieter Bolman** of **Elsevier**, who is ubiquitous nowadays, and the other by **Jean-Claude Guedon**. **Guedon's** thesis is best read up in <http://www.arl.org/arl/proceedings/138/guedon.html>. He added nothing new. The really interesting talk was by **Ann Wolpert**, who, as many will know, runs not only the library at **MIT** but **MIT Press** and **Dspace** too. This gives her a special perspective. Some of her comments are given below:

- Librarians and publishers have become like ships passing in the night. There are no clear demarcation lines or aims.
- Libraries are owned by the institution. Most publishers are not.
- Publishers aim to maximise revenue while librarians aim to manage costs.
- What libraries cannot do with licensed content is a big problem for them, which publishers do not seem to always realise.
- Both publishers and libraries serve academic authors and their ideas.
- Why do publishers want to archive digital content?
- Education cannot sustain the cost models that publishers would like them to.

I think many readers of *ATG* from all parts of the information chain will empathize with these bullets. One final information point. **Wolpert** does not know how **Dspace** will develop. It is in the hands of faculty as so much is. Currently faculty are putting gray literature up there but **MIT Press** has put up 100 OP books and they are getting the most hits — even though they are not easy to find! See <https://hpds1.mit.edu/handle/1721.1/1787>.

15th Annual EBSCO Executive Seminar, "Reassessment of Bundled Subscriptions to Electronic Journals," Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, January 26, 2003

Report by **Rosann Bazirjian** (Assistant Dean for Technical & Access Services, Penn State University)
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The *EBSCO Executive Seminar*, held on January 26, 2003, marked the 15th year of this series. The topic was "Reassessment of Bundled Subscriptions to Electronic Journals." **Mary Case**, Director, Office of Scholarly Communication, Association of Research Libraries, focused on trends. **Tom Sanville**, Executive Director of **OhioLink**, discussed the benefits. **Nancy Eaton**, Dean of Libraries, The Pennsylvania State University Libraries, spoke of concerns and long-term implications of bundled subscriptions.

Mary Case said that libraries are severely affected by our downturn in the economy, and the large deficits caused by September 11, 2001, corporate account scandals, and the looming threat of war. Aggregated packages remain a good deal for libraries, but as our licenses expire, we are now faced with what to do in these troubling economic times. She questioned what publishers can do to increase their income while libraries struggle to maintain spending levels. **Ms. Case** suggested that in order to increase revenue bases, publishers may move to all electronic and eliminate paper. This presents a problem for libraries since archiving and interlibrary loan issues have not yet been resolved. **Ms. Case** warned that we are "in for a bumpy ride" as long as publishers aim to keep their profits in the double digits.

Tom Sanville spoke about the benefits of bundled packages, but warned that libraries must consider usage and economics in combination. He indicated that libraries have already made all of the "tough

decisions" about what titles they need to retain in their collections. Cancellations come only after great duress. Historically, libraries spend more money each year, but subscribe to fewer and fewer titles. This is a long term "unsustainable situation."

Bundled licenses have improved the purchasing power of **OhioLink Libraries**. They are successful at keeping cost increases under greater control since they use their group buying power as a single buying unit. **Mr. Sanville** feels that he has found the evolutionary path to sustainability. He has seen greatly expanded title use and indicates that the large group dynamics of **OhioLink** gives them the feeling of "safety in numbers." Heaviest use is concentrated in few titles, which is not necessarily bad when **OhioLink's** economic model is taken into account. For **OhioLink**, this has become a good and solid business approach.

Nancy Eaton indicated that her presentation will present the topic from the perspective of a very large academic library. She reminded the audience that aggregated services did not come out of the "ether." Much of it came from requests by libraries to publishers. She also indicated that she was surprised that bulk pricing has not been looked at as part of aggregation. She said that libraries have and do affect marketplace and product development, and that they must continue to serve that role.

Ms. Eaton focused on the problems we are facing with data and statistics. Librarians continue to ask for better data on journal usage, and **Penn State** is developing a data warehouse to help analyze statistics and make better purchasing decisions. She feels that the results of the **E-Metrics Project** were disappointing as it concluded that there was no basis for commonality in vendor reported statistics. She said that we need to create trend data within our own institutions.

Ms. Eaton said she had some major concerns that she wanted to express to the audience, the first being the restrictions to ILL that are written into many of our licenses. There are also restrictions on alumni usage. She said that this dictates a new service pattern that our users resent. She also argued for better authentication systems that break apart locations and user demand.

Ms. Eaton believes that new approaches to scholarly communication will have an impact on aggregators. Open archives initiatives could change the dynamics, as well as Websites, such as **Columbia's CIAO**, that combine journals, preprints, proceedings, data, listservs, and courseware. These sites combine content and use of content, and this could have an effect on aggregators. She also cited a **CIC** digitization project on Native Americans which will pair libraries as repositories with academic faculty. If these types of projects take off, the aggregation issue could be short term.

After a question and answer period with the three speakers, the audience enjoyed a lovely, low-keyed reception hosted by **EBSCO** at the magnificent **Pyramid Club** in Philadelphia. The speakers provided the basis upon which informal discussion flourished atop the 52nd floor. 🦉

Books Are Us

Column Editor: **Anne Robichaux** (Professor Emerita, Medical University of South Carolina; Consultant, Majors Scientific Books)
<awkr772@charleston.net>

Column Editor's Note: This column covers fictitious accounts of people in our industry — librarians, publishers, vendors, booksellers, etc. — people like us. All contributions, comments, suggestions are welcome. — AR

Adriana Trigiani introduces a librarian in her Big Stone gap series, and includes the character in all three books: *Big Stone Gap: A Novel* (Ballantine Books, trade paper, April, 2001, ISBN: 0345438329); *Big Cherry Hollar* (Ballantine Books, paperback, March 2002, ISBN: 0345445848); and *Milk Glass Moon: A Big Stone Gap Novel* (Random House, 2002 ISBN: 0375506187).

There are many reviews, primarily positive, for these three novels on [continued on page 83](http://www.against-the-grain.com)

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Amazon.com, and brief descriptions of each book at **Randomhouse.com**. I originally bought the first two paperbacks primarily due to the setting, near and dear to my heart, the Blue Ridge mountains of Virginia. The characters are what make the books, however, and the main character is Ave Maria Mulligan, the town's self-proclaimed spinster, who is not, in spite of this description, the librarian, but the town pharmacist. On the very first page of the first chapter in *Big Stone Gap*, we learn that Ave Maria has a weekly date with the Wise County Bookmobile, comparing it to a "glittering royal coach delivering stories and knowledge and life itself." She admits: "I even love the smell of books. People have often told me that one of their strongest childhood memories is the scent of their grandmother's house. I never knew my grandmothers, but I could always count on the Bookmobile." We learn as the book progresses that Ave Maria's mother, recently deceased, was also a lover of books, particularly of historical romances, set in far away places, with a special interest in the clothing of various periods. (She was a seamstress and designed the costumes for the local Outdoor Drama.)

Ave Maria's description of Iva Lou Wade, the librarian and driver of the Bookmobile, is even better. She's strong ("drove the Bookmobile even though they said a woman couldn't handle it"), yet very feminine. Always made up her own rules. She's a "good-time gal, in her forties" who has "got being a woman down

... If you painted her, she'd be sitting on a pink cloud with gold-leaf edges, showing a lot of leg. Her perfume is so loud that when I visit the Bookmobile, I wind up smelling like her for the bulk of the day ... My father used to say that's how a woman ought to be. 'A man should know when there's a woman in the room. When Iva Lou comes in, there ain't no doubt.'"

We learn that Iva Lou dresses in flamboyant colors and form-fitting styles, with a form to show off. The dress she picked to wear when the town fêted Elizabeth Taylor is described as a masterpiece: a floor-length gown of peach Qiana polyester, with a full and flowing skirt, and a bodice fitted tightly like a series of rubber bands. "It looks very traditional, except for the fit." The best touch is an appliqué on the chest: "a picture of three books standing upright on a shelf, outlined in seed pearls and dotted with sequins." Her escort for the evening told her that her dress could turn him into an avid reader, whereupon Iva Lou confides to Ave "I'm going to let him peruse my card catalog directly following this shindig!"

Most men in *Big Stone Gap* are attracted to Iva Lou, and she pays attention to all of them, examining "men like eggs, perfect specimens created by God to nourish." One of her goals is to make love to an Italian man to "decide if they are indeed the world's greatest lovers." Before she can reach this goal, however, she receives a proposal (from the gentleman who apparently perused her "card catalog"). She accepts the proposal, and later we learn that she sips vodka from a mini-bottle to give her courage on her wedding day.

Iva Lou's prowess as a librarian and her success as a fund raiser are remarked upon as well. Ave Maria is impressed that she is able to order books from a branch of the University of Virginia "because she knows the powers that be at the university library. They've shared Sanka." And more telling, "she really is the best librarian there ever was. She respects library materials."

In *Big Cherry Holler*, eight years have passed and both Ave Maria Mulligan MacCesney and Iva Lou Wade Makin are married. This novel is primarily about Ave Maria, her marriage and her family. Iva Lou continues to be featured as her advisor, and flamboyant librarian. One description likens her to the state bird of Virginia as her lips, shoes and raincoat are ruby red. She is described as a woman who never loses her allure, who still turns every head when she comes into a room. Her role as Ave Maria's best friend is developed further.

Iva Lou Wade Makin continues an important role in *Milk Glass Moon*. She has become a member of Ave Maria's family, as honorary aunt to Ave's daughter, Etta. She is described as librarian and "sex-pert," the femme fatale with a well developed sense of fun and adventure who seeks out action and enjoys flirting, though she has married and settled down. She survives a life-or-death crisis in this book, and in the process is described by one local old-timer as the "one-hundred-percent girl" whose figure is considered to be of landmark status, on the order of Virginia's Natural Bridge!

At the end of the *Big Stone Gap* novel, there are a few pages devoted to a "conversation" with

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IMHBCO (In My Humble But Correct Opinion)

Sexing The Academy: Or, The Seductive Art of The Misleading Monograph Title

by **Rick Anderson** (Director of Resource Acquisition, The University Libraries, University of Nevada, Reno, 1664 No. Virginia Street, Reno, NV 89557; Phone: 775-784-6500 x.273; Fax: 775-784-1328) <rickand@unr.edu>

Look, here's the thing: nobody really has any illusions about scholarly monographs being fun to read, right? I mean, I know there are some things you just don't say in a polite group of librarians, but surely we can all agree that the vast majority of university press and scholarly trade publications — whatever their significance to the marketplace of ideas and however valuable their contribution to the nation's academic health — are not books with which a normal person would look forward to curling up by the fire on a rainy afternoon. Not everything good and valuable has to be fun, after all.

So let's just take the essentially boring nature of scholarly monographs as a given, and let's put that assumption to work as a partial explanation for a strange and wonderful marketing practice that dominated the academic marketplace throughout the 1990s: the strategy of taking impenetrable theoretical treatises and gussying them up with sexually suggestive titles. I'm not talking about books that genuinely deal with sex and sexuality, but do so in a dry and academic way — I'm talking about books that were given steamy titles despite the fact that they had little or nothing to do with sex.

I believe this practice emerged from the confluence of two simultaneous trends: the rise of postmodernism and Cultural Studies (whose exponents have a well-established love of sexually provocative language and an even more well-established aversion to rhetorical clarity)

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the author, **Adriana Trigiani**, who sat down with Iva Lou Wade Makin, *Big Stone Gap's* favorite librarian, for an interview. From this writing technique one feels very strongly that Iva Lou is either very real or based on someone very real in Big Stone Gap. This prompted me to contact **Ms. Trigiani** to find out if Iva Lou is based on someone she actually knows. She responded: "Iva Lou Wade Makin is an amalgam of different librarians I knew. My mother is a librarian, so I felt a calling to make your wonderful profession a bit more real — and certainly more fun! I loved my librarians growing up and they guided my reading choices, so I am forever indebted to them."

Adriana Trigiani grew up in Big Stone Gap, Virginia, in the 1970s. She now lives in New York City with her husband and new baby. She is an award winning playwright, television writer and producer, and documentary filmmaker. She has written the screenplay for the film version of *Big Stone Gap*, and she plans to direct the film.

and the decline of the scholarly book market. Sales were starting to head down in the 1990s, while the number of academics writing obliquely about the performativity of gender and hegemonic hermeneutics was still as high as ever. The need to sell just as many arid scholarly monographs in an increasingly selective marketplace resulted naturally in a flood of deliciously absurd book titles, the likes of which we're not likely to see again for some time. All were apparently formulated with the bored academic in mind: someone so desperate for a book written on an intrinsically interesting subject that he (or she) would take one glance at the title and immediately snatch it up without bothering to dig deeper — or even, in many cases, read the subtitle.

One of the more elegant examples of this practice comes courtesy of the **State University of New York Press**, a house that mastered the technique quite early on in the game and which published **Todd C. Parker's** *Sexing the Text*. Now, you need to understand that in Cultural Studies parlance, the verb "to sex" has nothing to do with sex as in "I wanna sex you up." "Sex" is a transitive verb, but its object is always an abstraction. When cultural theorists use the verb "to sex," they generally mean "to endow with gender-specific significance." **Parker's** book is a case in point, as you can see by looking at its subtitle: *The Rhetoric of Sexual Difference in British Literature, 1700-1750*. That date range is the real clincher. Right up until that point, it almost sounds as if the book might offer a hint of prurient interest, but that 1700-1750 (not only historically remote but also narrow) is enough to discourage the most desperate literary thrill-seeker.

This rhythm of anticipation and disappointment is typical. Consider **Ursula A. Kelly's** *Schooling Desire* (What's this? A little boarding-school fantasy scenario?): *Literacy, Cultural Politics and Pedagogy* (Oh. Nope.) or **Peggy Phelan's** *Mourning Sex* (What? Morning sex?): *Performing Public Memories* (Feh. Skunked again.). In the latter, the author "meditates on the trauma of loss, erotically and performatively" and "advances performance theory in dialogue with psychoanalysis, queer theory and cultural studies." This is not a promising blurb, though I suppose a mental image of the author meditating in an erotic and performative manner could hold a certain perverse attraction. Then there's *Sexing the Groove: Popular Music and Gender*, in which various cultural critics take turns avoiding any real discussion of sex in pop music. Instead, they unburden themselves of essays with titles like "Feeling and Fun: Romance, Dating and the Performing Male Body in the Take That Videos" and "Seduced by the Sign: An Analysis of

the Textual Links between Sound and Image in Pop Music Videos."

Less artful than *Sexing the Text* but more impressive in terms of sheer brazenness is a book from 1997 by **Melanie Weber**. Its main title is *Erect Men/Undulating Women*, and its subtitle is very long. The editors probably hoped you'd decide to buy it before getting to the end. It goes like this (big breath): *The Visual Imagery of Gender, Race and Progress in (guesses, anyone?) Reconstructive Illustrations of Human Evolution*. Yes, this is a book that explores the subtle "paleoanthropological conventions" that are socially constructed by means of those pictures that depict man's evolution from a knuckle-walking ape to an erectly walking human. (Get it? *Erectly*?) I'm not sure how feminine undulation figures in this thesis, because I haven't read the book. And I don't think I'm going to.

Here's another fun example, this one courtesy of author **Henry Krips** and **Cornell University Press**. Title: *Fetish*. Subtitle: *An Erotics of (wait for it...) Culture*. The word "culture" in a book title is not generally the harbinger of a scintillating read, but still, this one has possibilities. Maybe it's about pornography, you think to yourself, or about why **Kevin Kline** kept sniffing **Jamie Lee Curtis'** shoes in *A Fish Called Wanda*. Inquiring academics really might like to know these things! Then you check out the table of contents and come face to face with chapter titles like "Interpassivity and the Knowing Wink: Mystery Science Theater 3000" and "The Ambassador's Body: Unscreening the Gaze." Oh, well.

There are so many more. **Anne Fausto-Sterling's** *Sexing the Body* hints strongly at a certain amount of, um, practical applicability, but then you hit the subtitle: *Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*. And let's not even talk about **Elspeth Probyn's** equally misleading *Sexing the Self*, which carries the deflating subtitle *Gendered Positions in Cultural Studies*. **Robert Young's** 1994 monograph is intriguingly titled *Colonial Desire* (Mmm, new details on Jefferson and Hemings? Maybe something about the kinky secrets of those black-clad Puritans?) only to disappoint with the subtitle *Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*. Another fine example is *Perverse Desire and the Ambiguous Icon* by **Allen S. Weiss**, which offers no subtitle and therefore waits to disappoint the reader until the table of contents, which includes chapter titles like "Innate Totems:

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