November 2003

Bet You Missed It -- Press Clippings -- In the News -- Carefully Selected by You Crack Team of News Sleuths

Pamela M. Rose M.L.S.

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. M.L.S. (2003) "Bet You Missed It -- Press Clippings -- In the News -- Carefully Selected by You Crack Team of News Sleuths," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 15: Iss. 5, Article 29.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.4177>

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.

ask, and know the right answers. They can perform a demo and hold a room's attention, maybe hold the room spellbound. They can point out benefits, address finer points, and subtly work in the competition's shortcomings. It's great fun to be an expert on something. Who wouldn't try to move a sales call in their preferred direction?

Then there's everything else. What if the librarian asks? Well, there are a few recourses. "I don't know" can work, and "I don't know, but I'll find out" is better. But in the heat of action, how easy it is for a hopeful rep to half recall some briefing or memo or meeting at the company on the very topic in question, clouded as the question may seem at that moment, and to put money on the "Yes, we can do that" side of things, or on the craftier reply, "Yes, I think we can do that." A potentially bad moment is therefore averted and who knows, there's at least a decent chance the company actually can do that, or will do it in time.

Then again, the rep might not be the one who has overpromised. The company itself speaks directly to customers through its marketing program, the brochures, Website, and other such centrally-produced forms of communication. Here too, rhetoric will sometimes outpace reality. Maybe the language chosen to describe the company's services was, shall we say, slightly robust. Or, perhaps a new service to libraries was agreed to within the company. Marketing commences. Meanwhile, development of the new service falls behind schedule. But the brochures are out there. What to do, recall them? Can't do that, it won't be much longer anyway, will it? This isn't spoiled food, after all. No risk of spreading botulism in this business.

Delays in development of new services can plague reps as well, of course. Perhaps the rep became enthused about a coming service at a sales meeting, which is a principal purpose of sales meetings, naturally, to inspire the reps. Who wouldn't want to get right down to the work of spreading the good word? If the promised service falls behind, or is downsized, or cancelled even, what's a rep to do? The rep might not even know the bad news for some time. Special sales meetings are not called, after all, to quench the fires lit in prior ones. And reps don't schedule new sales calls to reverse calls already in the books.

Or maybe, as the rep spoke during the call, the librarian heard what he or she wanted to hear. Maybe the rep chose words quite carefully and was walking the very boundary between "yes" and "no." Who knows what the next rep in this office, sitting in this very chair, is going to say? That company will say just about anything. Can't let them put us out of the game. The librarian, for that side, might very much want to hear "yes," and will gladly overlook or forget or generously interpret the rep's more carefully crafted words.

Or maybe the rep isn't the one who has overpromised. Sometimes it's the librarian who pledges a certain volume of business, say, that by year-end fails to materialize, just as the prom-

ises of reps sometimes fall short. Meetings between librarians and their reps are not, after all, scripted events. At their best, meetings between vendors and librarians are not like a reading of the minutes, not like a newscast, not like the night's TV sports thrills clips, not like a waitperson's recital of the day's specials with an obligatory offer to answer "any questions" about the menu.

Instead, they're negotiations, full of give and take. And price is far from the most interesting topic of negotiation that can occur. Instead, many librarians are entrepreneurs, of ideas. As are many reps. Both, like any other entrepreneur, are looking for a backer of their idea, a partner. Neither can accomplish alone what they have in mind. The librarian might propose an idea to the vendor: "If your company would consider developing [fill in the blank], we would help you test, would give you more of our business, and since this is such a terrific idea, I know that other libraries would call you too." Or, the rep might say, more or less, "If we developed or offered [whatever], would you help us test and give us more of your business?"

Of course, most of these conversations lead to nothing. A good thing, too, since there's surely no shortage of bad ideas, or of ideas that are not bad exactly, but not exactly practical either. But, not always. Occasionally, the right librarian and the right rep, at the right moment,

realize they are onto something. This might work. Yes, this would interest a lot of libraries. And yes, we might be able to do it. The conversation takes on a certain excitement; this call is going somewhere. Librarian and rep alike want to ride this; they see conference papers, workshops, articles in journals, others talking about this, savings for the library, more business for the company, citations, compliments, commendations, promotions, awards, a measure of glory all around.

And maybe, in the end, nothing happens. Maybe the rep overpromises, can't get it done after all.

Well, some interesting moments, anyway. And maybe the idea, whomever had it, will rise again, later on. Next time a rep overpromises, think of what libraries can offer patrons today with help from vendors, against what was possible ten years ago, or five, or last year even. Many miracles, for sure, of ingenuity and technology, combined only through considerable persistence and persuasion, and probably a rash promise, and some chance-taking, along the way.

Of course, overpromising reps deserve to be shown the door, sometimes; no doubt most of the time. But everything we take for granted today in this business of vending to libraries, not to mention what causes us all to marvel, began as somebody's idea, and somebody's conversation, and usually, somebody's promise.

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

SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STYLUS by Pamela M. Rose (University at Buffalo)

For the first time religion and culture rather than technological or economic factors have been shown to be crucial to survival of a system of writing. Archeologists **Stephen Houston, John Baines, and Jerrold Cooper** compared Egyptian hieroglyphics, which disappeared around 500 B.C., with Mesopotamian cuneiform which fell out of use about 800 years later, and with Mayan script which petered out in the sixteenth century A.D. Writing in *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (Summer 2003), they show how ritual and literary used sustained hieroglyphics and cuneiform long after other scripts replaced it in everyday use, and how Mayan script died after its religious niche dissolved with the imposition of Christianity.

See — "The Demise of Writing" in Random Samples section edited by **Constance Holden** in *Science*, August 22, 2003, p.461.

LEGAL SLUG-FEST OVER INTERLOCH(K)EN by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

The **Interlochen Arts Camp** in the forests of Michigan is a rigorous classical music training ground that's honed Yo Yo Ma, Jessye Norman, Norah Jones and ... Mike Wallace.

Wha...? Can he sing? Play the kazoo?

Now they're suing Interlochen International Camp in N.H. — a UN creature for global Kumbaya-ism — for trade mark infringement.

In an effort to show widespread trademark abuse by the **N.H. Lock** crowd, Mich. **Loch** alleges a camper once wrote "Hilton" on a cabin without permission of the hotel chain.

See — **Patricia Callahan**, "Two Famous Camps, Into Locking Horns, Fight Over a Name," *The Wall Street Journal*, Oct. 13, 2003, p. A1.

Kluwer Online Reference Works ... Digital Delivery of Vital Resources

Electronic editions of milestone reference works are now available on Kluwer Online in the areas of Computational and Mathematical Sciences, and Earth and Environmental Sciences.

Visit www.kluweronline.com for complete details and to sign-up for your free 30-day trial.

www.kluweronline.com

kluweronline
Accelerating the World of Research

A MOTEL WAKE-UP CALL FROM SPONGEBOB

by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Viacom's **Nickelodeon** channel toyed with the idea of motels and theme parks but finally decided to just license their name to **Holiday Inn**. Soon, if you're in Orlando, you will be able to stay in a room with bunk beds and decorations of **Nickelodeon** characters.

In other big money licensing deals, **J.C. Penney**, **Lowe's** and **Avon** will be giving us **Nick Zone** boutiques, **Nick**-branded paint and **SpongeBob** boxer shorts, popsicles, and macaroni and cheese.

Yes, all of us here at **ATG World Headquarters** can hardly wait to get out there and consume.

See — Joe Flint, "Testing Limits of Licensing: SpongeBob-Motif Holiday Inn," *The Wall Street Journal*, Oct. 9, 2003, p. B1.

A MOMENTARY RESPITE FROM TAXES

by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Bezos and his **Amazon** wonks are hyper-savvy with the Internet. But they just can't seem to manage to collect local sales taxes. They say they're dealing with thousands of state and local jurisdictions and a maze of rules. If their entire force did nothing but work on a program for this, they might be able to whip it in 18 months.

In 1992 the Supreme Court said states could tax companies that didn't have a physical location there. But the crazy-quilt of taxes was too much for an out-of-state company to bear.

And the states are grumbling. And trying to unify their sales taxes.

See — Lee Gomes, "Slick, Deft Amazon Becomes All Thumbs When Handling Taxes," *The Wall Street Journal*, Oct. 6, 2003, p.B1.

ARE YOU FINALLY TIRED OF THE EAGLES?

by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

For those baby boomers who are stuck listening to **Crosby, Still & Nash** because you don't have the time to figure out what's out there, there are new products to the rescue. Music-match gives reports on what others are playing and tries to match it to your tastes much like **Amazon** does for books.

But that leaves what the industry calls "the **Steely Dan** Problem," named for a jazz rock duo who are liked intensely by people but for extremely different reasons. In trying to match it you could go down the path of wry narrative games or the vastly different '70s arena rock.

If you're confused by that, there's still the print world of music critics **Rolling Stone**, **Gramophone**, **Vibe**, **Spin**, **Q**, **Mojo**, **New Musical Express** and **Pitchfork**.

See — Lee Gomes, "Stuck on Steppenwolf? Now There Are Ways To Update Your Tastes," *The Wall Street Journal*, Oct. 13, 2003, p.B1.

REINING IN THE MUSIC MOGULS

by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Nice editorial lambasting the **Digital Millennium Copyright Act** for the ease with which someone can get a subpoena to invade your computer. There is no requirement of evidence or fact. Hence your privacy is obliterated by any vengeful individual you cross.

Titan Media, a pornographer, is threatening to use the subpoena to publicly expose folks it accuses of stealing.

So what do we do? We pass still more laws. **The Consumers, Schools, and Libraries Digital Rights Mangement Awareness Act of 2003** is in the Congressional pipeline to restore judicial review and due process to the system.

The author, **Sam Brownback**, is a Republican Senator from Kansas, home of that famous Republican **Alf Landon**.

See — Sam Brownback, "Who Will Police the Pirate-Hunters?" *The Wall Street Journal*, Oct. 7, 2003, p.A20.