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Books Are Us

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Biz of Acq from page 68

We decided to have the ILL Aide handle all unpacking under the supervision of the Acquisitions Supervisor, who took charge of all shipping and receiving. The aide also helped with routine clerical jobs, such as filing, which benefited the acquisitions group.

To further assist the ILL Specialist, the Cataloging Assistant took on other ILL tasks, in addition to adding and deleting ILL catalog records. The Cataloging Assistant position was at the same pay level as the ILL Specialist, and both staff members were familiar with OCLC databases. The Cataloging Assistant was willing to do this, and she and the ILL Specialist worked out a suitable division of labor.

Today, materials are moving more smoothly through the department. The time study showed us where time was needed and where it was available. Cleaning up duplication of effort has improved efficiency. The inchworm “humps” are decreasing as staff members get used to the new work patterns. We have realigned our workflow to match the tasks that have to be done, and we have stayed within the existing structure of the department. We can almost hear humming again, like bees around a hive.

Books Are Us

by **Anne Robichaux** (Professor Emerita, Medical University of South Carolina) <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

The UNC School of Library and Information Science list-serv mentioned a delightful Website, *Library Career Romances* (www.jenw.org/home.htm) featuring career romance or career girl novels published during the 1940's - 1960's. Its author, **Jen Wolfe**, developed the site in part for the M.L.I.S degree (University of Washington). Most of the titles in this genre explore the more common place, female dominated professions of those years, including — you guessed it — library science. The site features thirteen examples of these novels, often written by librarian authors, starring heroines “who find love amidst the glamour of card catalogs, microfilm readers, and bookmobiles.” There are descriptive, often humorous quotes from each title, plus a depiction of the cover art. **Jen** writes: “Though formulaic, dated, and varying in quality...the novels help document the evolving image of librarians in popular culture.” She finds underlying the varying heroines' plights and entanglements that a true love of libraries and librarianship shines through. The site features a bibliography with links and sources, including **Grant Burn's Librarians in Fiction**. **Jen** sent an email that she has more books to add, so we have another source to view how librarians are depicted in fiction!

One of my friends from water aerobics, a retired librarian, told me about *The Cruellest Month* by **Ha-**

zel Holt (St. Martin's Press, 1991, ISBN 0-312-05840-3), a murder mystery set in the Bodleian Library of Oxford University.

This book is one of a series of *Sheila Malory* mysteries, and includes wonderful descriptions of the Bodleian as well as of modern Oxford and war-time England. Two of the characters in the novel are librarians, one being the murder victim, and one who finds the body.

The librarian who finds the body is Tony, the son of a college chum of Mrs. Malory, as well as her godson. He is described as being very good at his job, “conscientious, reliable, and meticulous.” Devoted to the Bodleian, sometimes called the Bodley, he always seemed to come alive there. He's also described as quiet, withdrawn, shy, sweet, and possessing a nice nature. As the story progresses we learn that his fiancé is a young staff member in the library. When Mrs. Malory's son (a student at Oxford) learns this, he exclaims that he can't imagine finding a bride at the Bodleian as the women there “all frighten me to death” giving the reader a fleeting image of stern and unapproachable librarians.

The murder victim, Gwen Richmond, was a retired librarian, a spinster over 70, who returned to the Bodleian to work on the catalogue of a special collection. She called herself an “itinerant cataloguer.” She

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was found in an old stack room under some collapsed wooden shelving and the death was thought to be an accident. Tony does not believe the death is an accident, but believes she actually had been struck on the head by "a great heavy book, calf-bound with brass edges," a pedantic detail appreciated by Mrs. Malory. As we learn more about Gwen, we discover she was a rather despicable woman, irascible, mean spirited, hated by many (including her sister), and was quite possibly blackmailing more than one individual, including Tony's fiancé. Fortunately, these descriptors are unusual when one reads about librarians, except for that word spinster! But there appear to be several suspects in her mysterious death.

When Mrs. Malory questions Tony on why he has not shared his suspicions that Gwen's death was not an accident, Tony admits he hasn't told the police his suspicions because of the tabloid press, and adverse publicity for the Bodleian. He did not want to read a possible head line noting "The Body in the Library" (The Body in the Bodley?).

The narrator of the story, Mrs. Malory, is a writer of literary criticism who lives in the English seaside village of Taviscombe. She is temporarily staying in Oxford to research her current project. She admits that she has always "loved working in libraries," especially the Bodleian. She observes that the atmosphere of "accumulated centuries of learning had seemed almost a tangible thing, the cloak of history thrown round my shoulders." She enjoys inhaling that "marvelous library smell that seems to be equally composed of dust, books, and central heating." She provides further descriptions of both old and new parts of the Library, presenting an appealing picture of one of the Great Libraries and an unusual setting for a murder. Mrs. Malory is also a likeable, if sometimes bumbling, amateur sleuth, who eventually pieces together the mystery. Her sleuthing leads to delving into the past, including a painful reexamination of her own happy college days at Oxford, and the diaries of Gwen Richmond from WW II which evoke tragic memories of England during the war.

I sampled another Holt book and read *Mrs. Malory Wonders Why* (1995). While this story is not based in a library nor has librarians as

characters, the Taviscombe public library is mentioned in one chapter. A science fiction writer (a friend of Mrs. Malory's son) has been invited to give a talk in the library. Mrs. Malory has invited the speaker to spend the night with them, as the library staff member who arranged the talk had made reservations for him in a "notoriously uncomfortable hotel with vile food and a surly staff." Probably speaks to the lack of funds in the library's budget for sponsoring these events. But on the positive side, the library is shown to be a respectable place where the speaker won't be at his usual panel in a smoke-filled room, with a less than sober audience, "where the amber liquid's been flowing pretty well nonstop all day." As he was told in a comforting tone, "there won't be anything like that in Taviscombe Library!" Perhaps more's the pity!

According to her Website (www.hazelholt.co.uk/), **Hazel Holt** began writing fiction at the age of sixty and has averaged one a year since. Specializing in crime fiction, her primary character is *Sheila Malory* and *The Cruellest Month* is the second title in this series.

And They Were There

Reports of Meetings — Annual Conference of the Professional/Scholarly Publishing (PSP) Division of the American Association of Publishers (AAP)

Column Editor: **Sever Bordeianu** (University of Mexico) <sbordeia@unm.edu>

Annual Conference of the Professional/Scholarly Publishing (PSP) Division of the American Association of Publishers (AAP)
Washington, DC., February 2004.

Reported by **Judy Luther, MLS, MBA** (Informed Strategies;
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Open Access — Publisher Perspectives

Given the passion of those committed to open access, it can be challenging to achieve a balanced view that looks at the variables and options without being caught up in the moralistic fervor. The underlying question is where in the information chain should the costs be accommodated — at point of acquisition (by the library), point of use (by the user) or further up the chain by the author (at the point where it enters the distribution chain)?

Evidence at this early stage is anecdotal and opinions are based more on preferences and beliefs than real working models. The **Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers (ALPSP)**, a UK based organization) just commissioned a report to analyze and document experiences of publishers that have tried open access systems.

In February, the *Annual Conference of the Professional/Scholarly Publishing (PSP) Division of the American Association of Publishers (AAP)* was held in Washington, DC. Approximately 200 attendees from a mix of large society and commercial publishers focused on the topic of "Value in a Culture of Open Access."

The tone was one of inquiry with some loyalty to and defense of

existing subscription models that are an integral part of the financial health of some societies and core to their mission.

According to **Don King**, Research Professor at the School of Information at the **University of Pittsburg**, the decline in individual print subscriptions can be attributed in part to electronic access provided by the library. **Tom Sanville**, Executive Director of **Ohiolink**, felt that a print archive was only needed if the print version was different than the online version. These trends require that many societies reengineer their publishing processes, creating the electronic version as the primary with print as a by product.

Usage Based

Author of *Information Rules*, **Hal Varian**, who has a joint faculty appointment in the Schools of Information Management as well as Business at **UC Berkeley**, recognized that "information is costly to produce but cheap to reproduce." With high fixed costs and low variable costs, **Hal** concluded that information should be priced on its value rather than its costs.

Although the price of electronic journals is based on access, many agreed with **Karen Hunter**, Senior VP of Strategy at **Elsevier**, who

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