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Little Red Herrings — PASCAL

by Mark Y. Herring (Dean of Library Services, Dacus Library, Winthrop University) <herringm@winthrop.edu>

PASCAL. It has nothing to do with the famous French philosopher. It has nothing to do with a computer language. But in terms of academic libraries in South Carolina, it may be more important than either.

Surely by now you’ve heard of it? Partnership Among South Carolina Academic Libraries is the brainchild of South Carolina academic librarians, and if the infant survives, it will become the braintrust of South Carolina’s public and private academic libraries resource sharing collaborative. For PASCAL has to do with technology on the one hand and a philosophy of broad-based library service on the other.

Sharing is, of course, not new to South Carolina academic librarians. We’ve been sharing for decades now. We have to. It’s the nature of library services to do that sort of thing. We borrow from each other because budgets are tight and needs are so great. Decades ago South Carolina academic librarians began sharing resources. And expertise. And just about anything else you can think of, whether nailed down or not. Two groups, the Library Directors’ Forum (consisting largely of academic librarians at publicly supported institutions) and the Library Directors Council (consisting of members of the South Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities), worked together for years but asymptotically; always approaching, but never quite reaching, a full-service joint venture. Then something novel occurred.

The two groups got together and made sharing our paramount concern. Academic directors and deans from both the public and private ankles of South Carolina’s university and college libraries put their heads together and, like Athena from the head of Zeus, PASCAL was born. Patterned after such services in other states’ Virginia’s VIVA, Georgia’s Galileo, Missouri’s MOBIUS and Kentucky’s KYVL — PASCAL will eventually become South Carolina’s statewide consortium. Pressing its three major programs — Consortial Purchasing (via either individual initiatives or umbrella-like operations such as DISCUS-Academic), Universal Borrowing and Digitization — PASCAL is rapidly becoming a veritable universe of services and will eventually become the statewide consortia.

Statewide funding is critical in order for PASCAL to become as fully viable as statewide consortia in other states. For example, Virginia’s VIVA recently reported a cost avoidance of $103 million (see: http://www.viva.lib.va.us/viva/outreach/releases/covits20021002.html). Indeed, if funding from South Carolina’s educational lottery can be secured, South Carolina’s academic libraries would see their budget buying power increase 4 to 10 times! It only makes sense. Instead of dozens of South Carolina academic libraries (potentially 54 in all) buying the same half-dozen databases, why not a statewide consortium buy one for all?

By the time you read these words, we’ll know if PASCAL made it through the budget process. The Senate Finance Committee has already approved lottery dollars for PASCAL, and we loudly applaud its foresight. Now it moves to the larger legislature. This is a critical time for PASCAL. We look to the larger legislature to see this important step for what it is: information access for all. Legislatures in other states have seen the merit of such cooperatives and funded them to the benefit of all their constituencies. Those constituencies have not been disappointed, and neither have their representatives. How could they be with millions in cost avoidance, access to information statewide and greater learning for all? We know Palmetto legislators know a good thing when they see it. Surely they will agree with us that this is a good thing to do for this great state and its citizens. And doing it from the educational lottery funds only makes sense!

Meanwhile, are academic librarians just waiting around for someone else to act? Heaven’s no. In fact, the state’s academic library...
**CHEEK TO SMITH**

by Pamela M. Rose (University at Buffalo)

Was Joseph Smith, the founding father of the Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), one of your ancestors? Now you can find out at the Sorenson Molecular Genealogy Foundation. The first version of a free database combining family records with genetic information will aid researchers who can have their DNA analyzed by submitting a few cheek cells, and then look for a match. If successful, clients will be given the names and locations of people with similar DNA born before 1900 (to protect the privacy of the donors). The extensiveness of the repository will also prove useful to geneticists tracking down disease genes.


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**CREATIONIST BOOK CORRECTION**

by Pamela M. Rose (University at Buffalo)

Science mis-reported this story which was summarized in the February issue of ATG: The Public Information Manager of the American Geophysical Union, Harvey Leffert, sent the following clarification:  

“Science magazine misstated the position of the scientific society presidents regarding the creationist Grand Canyon book. (AGU is one of the seven societies.) We did not seek to censor the book, nor did we ask “that sales be stopped”... The letter, dated last December 16, says that the book, “if it remains available in Grand Canyon bookstores,” should be shelved with other nonscience books, as “we must clearly distinguish religious tenets from scientific knowledge.”

The controversial book, The Grand Canyon: A Different View, is a collection of creationist essays. Science has agreed to publish a correction as well.