September 2003

Follow the Greenback Road: Budgeting for Reference Resources

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Recommended Citation

Wilkinson, Frances C. and Lewis, Linda (2003) "Follow the Greenback Road: Budgeting for Reference Resources," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 15: Iss. 4, Article 7.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.4474>

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ISSN: 1043-2094

REFERENCE PUBLISHING ISSUE

VOLUME 15, NUMBER 4

Against the Grain

c/o Katina Strauch
209 Richardson Avenue
MSC 98, The Citadel
Charleston, SC 29409

TM

SEPTEMBER 2003

Against the Grain

"Linking Publishers, Vendors and Librarians"

Follow the Greenback Road: Budgeting for Reference Resources

by **Frances C. Wilkinson** (The University of New Mexico; Phone: 505-277-4241; Fax: 505-277-7196) <fwilkins@unm.edu> and **Linda Lewis** (The University of New Mexico; Phone: 505-277-7828; Fax: 505-277-4446) <llewis@unm.edu>

This keynote column began in the *Reference Publishing Issue of Against the Grain* in 1997. Over the years the authors have asked librarians and sometimes students and/or publishers a variety of questions of current interest such as: what percentage of reference publishing is electronic vs. print, can you afford both, how do you decide which format to buy, what are the advantages of print vs. electronic, which do you prefer and why, which do your patrons prefer and why, how do you link to e-products, do you keep usage statistics, what are the future trends in reference publishing, and is print being abandoned?

So, what has changed? Five years ago the question seemed to be "Do we want it in electronic format in addition to print?" Only a year or so ago,

the question seemed to be "Do we want it in print in addition to electronic format?" Now the question seems to be "If it is only available in print, will our students use it?" Another change is the national drop in reference questions. In most libraries, patrons are not coming to the reference desk as they used to. Now they are often dialing in to locate reference materials. Libraries are expanding their electronic reference services to meet the increased demand.

According to the *Library Journal* review of the best reference sources of 2002 (*Library Journal*, vol. 128, no. 7, p. 40, April 15, 2003), print reference tools continue to be published and purchased at about the same levels as previously even though online reference sources continue to proliferate.

Many university presses have been hurt by the decline in the library market. Some have responded by publishing fewer titles, printing fewer copies and raising prices (*Choice*, vol. 40, no. 9, p. 1485-1490). The eternal inflation in serials prices and the growth in the number (and costs) of electronic resources add to the stress on library budgets and librarians. Many publishers produce their major reference tools in both print and electronic formats. Costs of materials continue to increase and patrons continue to want more resources while most library budgets remain stable at best. What does all this mean for

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If Rumors Were Horses

I tell you what! Just when we thought that the **Mergers & Acquisitions** bug had receded, here we go again!

ProQuest Information and Learning has acquired **SIRS Publishing, Inc. (SIRS)**, the publisher of **SIRS Researcher(r)**, **SIRS Discoverer(r)**, **SIRS Enduring Issues(tm)** and other databases. **SIRS**, based in Boca Raton, Fla., provides online, CD-ROM, and print reference databases to more than 50,000 libraries worldwide. The acquisition was finalized on July 21, 2003. **SIRS** co-founder **Eleanor Goldstein** will remain with **ProQuest** as Founding Publisher, reporting to **Barbara Beach** Vice President, K-12 Publishing, **ProQuest** Information and Learning. **SIRS** offices will remain in Boca Raton, Fla. www.il.proquest.com

Baker & Taylor, Inc. has announced the purchase of the 175-year old company by **Willis Stein & Partners** from **The Carlyle Group** for \$255 million. Based in Chicago, IL, **Willis Stein & Partners** is a private equity investment firm specializing in investments in profitable, well-managed, and growing businesses targeting the consumer products and services, media, telecommunications, business services, manufacturing, and health care industries. The principals of **Willis Stein** have made investments in more than 40 companies and currently manage approximately \$3.0 billion of equity capital. **The Carlyle Group** acquired **Baker & Taylor** from **W.R. Grace & Co.** in 1992. **Gary Rautenstrauch**, **Baker & Taylor's** CEO and President told employees at the sale's closing that **Willis Stein** would appoint **Richard Willis** as the new CEO and President. **Richard Willis** brings more than 20 years of experience in the media and manufacturing industries. **Mr. Rautenstrauch** will remain involved with the company through the transition. See our interview with **Gary Shirk**, President and COO, YBP, this issue, p.64.

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Follow the Greenback Road:
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reference purchases and budgets? Librarians were asked about trends in the types of reference materials being purchased by their libraries, about how these changes have affected their ability to deliver reference services, about how their budgets for electronic resources were structured, and, if, due to increasingly tight budgets, were they considering evaluating electronic resources for cancellation. The authors conducted an interview-style "joint discussion," asking seven multi-part questions of ten reference and/or collection management librarians from four institutions (three academic libraries and one special library). Their informative, thought-provoking answers follow.

1A. Are you buying fewer, the same, or more reference materials overall this year than you have in the past several years?

Donna Cromer, Coordinator of and Co-Sector for Reference Services, Centennial Science and Engineering Library, General Library, **The University of New Mexico**: "The same to maybe a little more."

Carol Ritzen Kem, Department of Collection Management, with **Shelley Arlen**, Acting Chair of the Department of Collection Management, and **Marilyn Ochoa**, Department of Humanities and Social Science Services, George A. Smathers Libraries, **University of Florida**, Gainesville, Florida: "Fewer print sources are being purchased."

Victoria A. Nozero, Head of Research & Information and **Chris Sugnet**, Director of Collection Development and Management Division, University Libraries, **University of Nevada Las Vegas**: "We purchased more reference materials this year."

Jeane E. Strub, Librarian, Databases & Electronic Journals, with **Kathy Pratt**, **Carol Hoover**, and **Lyn Bennett**, **Los Alamos National Laboratory Library**, Los Alamos, NM: "The same."

1B. Has the type of reference material you purchase changed/shifted in the past several years, for example, are you buying more general resources or are you buying more subject specific resources?

Donna Cromer: "About the same. We try to balance between the general and the discipline specific (within all of science and technology, including psychology)."

Carol Ritzen Kem with **Shelley Arlen** and **Marilyn Ochoa**: "To some extent, purchases are more general in nature although, as always, it depends on what is available. To some extent, it appears publishers are combining high school and college level materials; that is, a publication will be written that can be promoted to both markets, which expands sales possibilities. A comparison with older print materials shows that current materials often have more visuals, photographs and graphics with "chunks" of text rather than lengthy essays or sections of information. The reference librarians do not usually select very specific sources from their budgets. For example, a bibliography on a single author or limited subject would

more generally be purchased by collection management subject specialists and placed in the general circulating collection."

Victoria A. Nozero and **Chris Sugnet**: "Our buying pattern has not changed over the past several years. We continue to buy more subject specific resources than general ones. But the subjects are rather broad, like business or literature or education."

Jeane E. Strub with **Kathy Pratt**, **Carol Hoover**, and **Lyn Bennett**: "No, we always bought more subject specific resources."

1C. Are you buying more large, multi-volume encyclopedias or more single volume titles?

Donna Cromer: "We are generally spare in our purchasing of the big sets of encyclopedias. However, because we had some extra gift money this past year, we were able to buy several expensive large encyclopedias."

Carol Ritzen Kem with **Shelley Arlen** and **Marilyn Ochoa**: "No real philosophical change. It depends on what is published."

Victoria A. Nozero and **Chris Sugnet**: "Cost alone limits the purchase of large, multi-volume titles. With a reference budget of under \$20,000 we can't afford too many multi-volume titles. We try to find the most cost-effective way of getting the information our students and faculty need."

Jeane E. Strub with **Kathy Pratt**, **Carol Hoover**, and **Lyn Bennett**: "No change."

2A. How about formats: Are you purchasing reference titles mainly in print or in electronic versions?

Donna Cromer: "Still mostly print, except for the abstracts and indexes (A&I). We get all of these online now, and just recently cancelled the last few we were getting in print. As for handbooks, manuals, etc, we generally get these in print. There are a few that are both print and online. There are two, *Encyclopedia of Astronomy and Astrophysics* and the *Encyclopedia of Life Sciences*, for which we purchased a hard copy when they were first published and we continue to pay a yearly subscription fee for access to the continually updated online versions."

Carol Ritzen Kem with **Shelley Arlen** and **Marilyn Ochoa**: "Reference titles are still mainly print sources."

Victoria A. Nozero and **Chris Sugnet**: "It really depends on the title. However, we lean towards electronic format if it is available and user friendly."

Jeane E. Strub with **Kathy Pratt**, **Carol Hoover**, and **Lyn Bennett**: "We still mainly purchase print reference titles but are moving to electronic."

2B. How have your buying patterns of various formats changed from a few years ago?

Donna Cromer: "We experimented a couple of years ago with CD-ROM versions of some standard handbooks, but we found that no one used them, staff included. The end result was to move all but a very few into the circulating collection. We do not plan to buy any more on CD-ROM, unless that is the only format available. Some things are still much easier to use in print."

Carol Ritzen Kem with **Shelley Arlen** and **Marilyn Ochoa**: "For various formats, we prefer online to CD-ROM products. Collection management faculty purchase some CD-ROM products for the reference collection on their subject funds although the number is limited."

Victoria A. Nozero and **Chris Sugnet**: "We are purchasing more electronic resources than a few years ago. And we have switched from CD products available on a network only in the library, to the Web version of products when they are available."

Jeane E. Strub with **Kathy Pratt**, **Carol Hoover**, and **Lyn Bennett**: "We buy more electronic titles."

2C. What factors besides budgets have led to these changes?

Donna Cromer: "Non-usage is the major factor in not buying CD-ROM."

Carol Ritzen Kem with **Shelley Arlen** and **Marilyn Ochoa**: "Issues related to format choice include access, maintenance and staff time. Format and operating systems of some CD-ROM products are incompatible with our system so a major staff time commitment is necessary to facilitate access to some products."

Victoria A. Nozero and **Chris Sugnet**: "We have a new facility with more than 200 public state of the art computers. And we now have two reference desks, so in many cases we'd need to buy two copies of a title if we didn't get it electronically. The Web has taken over as the access choice by library patrons, so that sources only available in print or on networked CD's in the library are no longer a cost-effective way of spending our limited funds."

Jeane E. Strub with **Kathy Pratt**, **Carol Hoover**, and **Lyn Bennett**: "Functionality, cross searching, linking, usage statistics, convenience, and less shelving space."

3A. How have these changes affected your ability to deliver reference service?

Donna Cromer: "The trend towards more online, especially A&I (Abstract and Index) and full text resources, has greatly increased our ability to provide reference services."

Carol Ritzen Kem with **Shelley Arlen** and **Marilyn Ochoa**: "In general, the way we provide reference service has not changed dramatically. There are still print resources that are the best to use for a particular question. However, it is true that we do often go to the electronic resource. For example, for some print sources, we have an electronic version, like *Gale's Literature Resource Center*, which combines a lot of the *Contemporary Literary Criticism* series (CLC) and other *Dictionary of Literary Biography Online*. This is the first place I might look for questions about literature because it provides for a more effective and efficient search for students just wanting quick information. Also, the types of questions asked have changed. People know there are indexes out there where specific information can be provided, and sometimes look to the electronic because it is more timely and easier to use than a print form such as the *New York Times Index*. Also, the indexes to many of these periodicals are only available electronically."

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Victoria A. Nozero and Chris Sugnet: "Students and faculty are interested in information that can get access anytime from anywhere. Referring them to a print resource, unless it's the only one that answers their question, is becoming a less acceptable way of providing assistance. Adding Virtual Reference services is a natural outcome of the growing reliance on the Web for the delivery of reference assistance – if the sources are there, shouldn't reference assistance be there as well? And then, if you're providing assistance through chat on the Web, you need your resources to be in that format as well."

Jeane E. Strub with Kathy Pratt, Carol Hoover, and Lyn Bennett: "Reference questions have become more difficult to answer. Customers find answers to the easier questions themselves."

3B. With reference statistics continuing to trend downward, and more people turning to the Web for information, do decreases in reference budgets matter that much anymore?

Donna Cromer: "That's a good question. I think we can tolerate some lowering in the non A&I slice of the reference budget."

Carol Ritzen Kem with Shelley Arlen and Marilyn Ochoa: "Decreases in budget matters. We teach classes and explain that we can provide our users with good comprehensive authoritative information that is well organized, as opposed to the wild Web, which is not always authoritative. If budgets decrease, we cannot purchase and offer the same number of quality resources. Our users would not be as certain of quality or immediacy."

Victoria A. Nozero and Chris Sugnet: "We moved into a new facility approximately two and a half years ago. Our reference statistics increased 30% at the time of the move, and have held relatively steady every year since, so we're not in a position of declining use of the service reflected in declining budgets. However, we are expanding reference services into the Web environment through a virtual reference service coupled with a strong marketing effort for this new service as well as the traditional in-person or by telephone reference assistance."

Jeane E. Strub with Kathy Pratt, Carol Hoover, and Lyn Bennett: "Yes. We still pay for reference resource access for our customers. The content we need access to is not free on the Web."

3C. Why should libraries continue to invest in reference collections?

Donna Cromer: "We are still in the question answering and information resource education business, and we need these resources to do that job."

Carol Ritzen Kem with Shelley Arlen and Marilyn Ochoa: "Reference collections are important to maintain because of the types of resources that are in them, whether in print or electronic. As long as we can provide comprehensive, authoritative and well organized information, we will remain a primary and valuable resource for our students and faculty."

DONNA CROMER'S TABLE (see p.24)

	Ref books	Ref serials	Serial%	Sci/eng total	Ref % of total sci/eng
2002/2003	10,646	163,924	0.990058	1,531,933	11%
2001/2002	14,398	84,465	0.854364	1,473,347	7%
2000/2001	13,938	148,818	0.914362	1,594,979	10%
1999/2000	11,357	158,717	0.933223	1,506,037	11%
1998/1999	18,863	125,374	0.869222	1,293,067	11%
1997/1998	23,739	130,540	0.846129	1,313,156	12%
1996/1997	5,858	115,127	0.951580	1,363,760	9%

(All figures are in dollars, except those listed as percentages.)

Victoria A. Nozero and Chris Sugnet: "The need for a print reference collection continues because of the mission of an academic library – to provide support for the curriculum of the parent institution. The library is part of the learning community and has a responsibility to provide the resources this community needs to succeed. Not all information is available on the Web, and even if it is available it is often not easily accessible or organized in a way that makes it valuable to the user. The library, its staff, and its carefully selected reference collection, whatever the format, provide the tools to tame this information overload."

Jeane E. Strub with Kathy Pratt, Carol Hoover, and Lyn Bennett: "The content we need is not free on the Internet."

4A. How is your reference budget structured, Do you have a separate budget for reference materials?

Donna Cromer: "Yes, we have a separate line for reference materials, although in the end, all the sci/eng materials come out of one pot."

Carol Ritzen Kem with Shelley Arlen and Marilyn Ochoa: "Yes. There is a separate budget for reference materials, which members of that department manage. Subject specialists in the Department of Collection Management have budgets for their specific areas, which they manage. Finally, the budgets are divided among monographs, continuations and approval materials."

Victoria A. Nozero and Chris Sugnet: "We have a separate budget for print reference monographs."

Jeane E. Strub with Kathy Pratt, Carol Hoover, and Lyn Bennett: "No. We buy in scope materials in two areas: electronic or print."

4B. Does it include materials in all subject areas? Or are there subject funds that include both circulating and reference materials?

Donna Cromer: "Yes, all sci/tech, including psychology. However, each subject fund occasionally buys reference materials."

Carol Ritzen Kem with Shelley Arlen and Marilyn Ochoa: "There is a general reference budget but reference librarians select within this for their assigned subject areas, such as multicultural materials, philosophy or English, for example. The funds for circulating materials are assigned to the subject specialties in collection management as well as to the branch and satellite libraries that are part of our system. Areas represented by a branch or satellite library, such as education or fine arts, will be represented in the reference collection only through

general titles or some particularly important major work."

Victoria A. Nozero and Chris Sugnet: "It can be expended for material in all subject areas. Subject funds may also be used for reference titles."

Jeane E. Strub with Kathy Pratt, Carol Hoover, and Lyn Bennett: "Yes [it includes materials in all subject areas]. Not applicable [...subject funds that include both circulating and reference materials]."

4C. Are there separate budgets for different formats such as serials and books?

Donna Cromer: "Yes, although it is somewhat flexible."

Carol Ritzen Kem with Shelley Arlen and Marilyn Ochoa: "Yes. There are budgets for monographs, continuations and approvals."

Victoria A. Nozero and Chris Sugnet: "Serials and monographs funds are kept separate."

Jeane E. Strub with Kathy Pratt, Carol Hoover, and Lyn Bennett: "Yes."

5A. How do you budget for electronic resources? Are there separate budgets for electronic books? For electronic journals?

Donna Cromer: "In 1993/1994 we created the first lines for electronic materials. But it's not that simple, as some are both formats. Also, so far, in sci/tech at least, most of our electronic materials are serials. Although there are a few non A&I."

Carol Ritzen Kem with Shelley Arlen and Marilyn Ochoa: "For books, we have used netLibrary. We have purchased three 'batches' through SOLINET (a southeastern consortium) at a cost savings over individual purchase. This came through a library-wide 'master' budget. We also select individual titles that are purchased through collection management subject funds. A state consortium, to which we contribute, pays for some electronic sources. We also receive some journals through information service providers rather than as individual titles, if we subscribe to the print source, but access may be limited by years or some other factor."

Victoria A. Nozero and Chris Sugnet: "We have a separate fund category called 'Electronic resources' with three separate subfunds for serials, eBooks, and one time purchases (used for back files, etc.)."

Jeane E. Strub with Kathy Pratt, Carol Hoover, and Lyn Bennett: "No, we use an electronic and a print budget."

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5B. How are subject electronic resources funded?

Donna Cromer: "No different than print."

Carol Ritzen Kem with Shelley Arlen and Marilyn Ochoa: "These purchases are done on a library-wide basis. Individual librarians, departments or subject selectors make recommendations for the master fund or they may combine monies from several subject funds. Individual selectors can purchase these materials but the cost usually means that they do not unilaterally do this from their specific funds."

Victoria A. Nozero and Chris Sugnet: "Because of their serial nature, almost all electronic resources are purchased with state-appropriated funds in the base budget, not with soft money. Requests for new resources are prioritized periodically by the Subject Librarians group, and we have a Serials Review group consisting of the Head of CD and some subject librarians that looks at use and possible cancellation of both print and electronic."

Jeane E. Strub with Kathy Pratt, Carol Hoover, and Lyn Bennett: "We buy print or electronic content."

5C. What percent of the acquisitions budget is spent on both print and electronic reference materials (break each amount out separately if possible)?

Donna Cromer: "Approximately 80% electronic, 20% print."

Carol Ritzen Kem with Shelley Arlen and Marilyn Ochoa: No answer given.

Victoria A. Nozero and Chris Sugnet: "The percent of the total acquisitions budget that can be considered 'reference' is about 12% with approximately 3% for reference print and 9% for electronic reference titles."

Jeane E. Strub with Kathy Pratt, Carol Hoover, and Lyn Bennett: "Print—5%, electronic—15%."

6A. Has the structure of the reference budget changed over the past several years? How?

Donna Cromer: "Not really."

Carol Ritzen Kem with Shelley Arlen and Marilyn Ochoa: "No."

Victoria A. Nozero and Chris Sugnet: "We recently changed the overall budget structure to reflect the growth in electronic serials and eBooks. Now they are tracked as sub-categories under Electronic Resources. However, the fact that an eBook or an electronic index can be utilized in a reference mode or transaction is not reflected by fund codes."

Jeane E. Strub with Kathy Pratt, Carol Hoover, and Lyn Bennett: "We do not distinguish reference budget from main collection budget."

6B. Has your reference budget shrunk or grown over the past several years? How much?

Donna Cromer: No answer given.

Carol Ritzen Kem with Shelley Arlen and Marilyn Ochoa: "The budget for specific reference purchases is flat. The growth has come in group purchases."

Victoria A. Nozero and Chris Sugnet: "The overall budget for reference has grown by approximately 40% in the last four years. This is entirely due to the shift to electronic resources and an approximation based on the cost of key high-end products such as *Web of Science* and *WOS* backfiles."

Jeane E. Strub with Kathy Pratt, Carol Hoover, and Lyn Bennett: No answer given.

6C. What trends have you seen in reference budgeting over the past several years?

Donna Cromer: "I made a brief table to illustrate our reference budget over the last seven years (see p. 22). As you can see, things go up and down. The serials line is primarily electronic, while the book line is primarily print. Two caveats on the above figures. One, some of the fluctuation from year to year is because of extra gift and bond funds, outside of the normal budget, and two, there is overlap between electronic and print and books and serials, so treat these data as rough."

Carol Ritzen Kem with Shelley Arlen and Marilyn Ochoa: "There are more consortia agreements and purchases."

Victoria A. Nozero and Chris Sugnet: "The budget is relatively static for print, almost all of the growth is for electronic access to new reference products or for electronic versions of titles we formerly got in print. Although we recognize the need for print, given a choice we prefer electronic for most applications. We have remote users across the country and we are opening a geographically separate research campus focused on health and biomed that will have no medical library."

Jeane E. Strub with Kathy Pratt, Carol Hoover, and Lyn Bennett: No answer given.

7A. With increasingly tight budgets, are you considering evaluating electronic resources for cancellation just as most libraries have evaluated serials over the past several years for cancellation projects? Why or why not?

Donna Cromer: "Absolutely. In fact, if it came down to it, I could imagine switching major A&I resources from year to year. We pay huge amounts of money for these, and if neces-

sary, could do without one for a year. One advantage is that we wouldn't miss anything when we re-subscribed. When you buy these, you buy the whole thing. Also, we do use the reference collection less and less these days, as **Google** has become the reference tool of choice."

Carol Ritzen Kem with Shelley Arlen and Marilyn Ochoa: "Review and evaluation is a regular and ongoing process. Vendors are also evaluated on a regular basis. We, as librarians in an individual member library, can make recommendations to the consortia but all members collectively vote to purchase or cancel. Our recommendations are advisory only."

Victoria A. Nozero and Chris Sugnet: "Yes, we continually evaluate using use statistics and assessments of price per use. We look at relative value of what we have now versus competitor's products when they are available and have switched to another product when factors such as regional consortia discounts or state-wide contract purchasing saved us money. Recently we have started usability assessments. We have also cancelled some large ticket titles when the coverage overlap with less expensive products is significant and relative usability is not an issue. We find that the ability of our users to adapt to shifts in products (search engine, etc.) is high."

Jeane E. Strub with Kathy Pratt, Carol Hoover, and Lyn Bennett: "We are not evaluating electronic resources for cancellation since we are presently in a positive budget cycle."

Conclusion

What do these responses tell us? While the librarians are split on whether or not they are continuing to purchase the same amount of print reference resources, all of them indicate that they are spending more of their budgets on electronic resources. Print survives, but mainly for individual subject resources—large encyclopedias are less likely to be purchased. Dual formats are becoming much less common. CD-ROMs are dead, or dying.

Reference collections continue to be vital in supporting patrons' needs. Although electronic resources have not completely supplanted print in respondents' libraries, clearly, for reference they are now the norm. They are even being evaluated for cancellation, just as print journals have been for years. Electronic resources have improved the ability to answer reference questions, and have helped increase the growth of electronic services such as virtual reference. Some libraries are seeing a transformation in the type of reference questions that their patrons are asking. The questions are more complicated and more specialized now because patrons can easily find answers for many of the simpler questions on the Internet.

Most librarians responding have a separate budget for reference materials and a separate budget for electronic materials, while only some subdivide their electronic resources budget into categories such as reference, serials, or books. Respondents are spending 75-80% of their reference budgets on electronic materials. So, to better understand the future of reference budgets—just follow the greenback road—to electronics!

Rumors
from page 18

is going to be working with the greatest, **Eckart Scheffler** <escheffler@degryuterny.com>. Ellen will visit library wholesalers and Internet booksellers, and represent the two publishers at library meetings. In addition

she will visit academic libraries on a regular basis.

Well, it's not quite September and the registrations for the **Charleston Conference** are rolling in! Have you sent yours in yet? <http://www.katina.info/conference>

I'm about out of steam. More **Rumors** in November! See you then.