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## Lost in Austin

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## Leaving the Books Behind from page 69

ethic, as well as the skills I knew. She also wanted to verify that this had not changed over the years. As a result, she found that I was even more impassioned about library work today than I was years ago, but perhaps with better direction.


The **onsite interview** is crucial to your being employed. Some institutions require you to do one day, others require two, or multiple visits. Generally, they start with a short tour of the institution, or at least the parts that interact with your prospective job placement. Then, you have combinations of sections/groups, individuals, and the direct supervisor of the job. When I applied for a Serials Librarian job, I met with the Technical Services staff, the Associate Directors, the Director, the Reference staff, the Staff involved with media and other services, and a critical time with the Technical Services head, where I was asked to talk about a specific journal title they had cataloged locally and comment on fields used, other fields that were possible to use and how I would change the emphasis of the cataloging. This last session was a little scary, but I decided to be direct and honest.

I think that is the only way to approach such a request. Right or wrong, I became very defensive of the local cataloging before

OCLC radical upgrades and suggested we go into the record and change it back. It led to my discussion of strengths in consistent authority work and adherence to cataloging rules. I also elaborated on further access points we could use to help the patrons and reference staff. Whew! Had to take a deep breath and settle back in the chair, hoping she would agree. There are sometimes risks you must take, but I always feel secure in sticking to my ethics and the cataloging rules. You may want to watch for institutions which require you to present a subject to the staff in a twenty minute segment. Generally, they tell you about it when you are scheduled for the onsite interview and the preparation time can be two weeks or less. If you haven't done many presentations, this could be stressful, but they generally want to get an idea about your ways of teaching and leading. I think they're fun, but that's just me.

Remember, anything you write in your cover letter and résumé can be questioned! From the most significant to the least, they have the right to ask you about it. Be truthful, realistic and try to draw conclusions about your experiences that others can see easily. I was quizzed about preservation from a statement about a church library experience, asked to explain statements in an article I had written, identify an article where I discussed specific aspects of management and change, expound on the most important event of my thirty years of experience, explain how

to gain conference experience without money or support from the library, and talk about staff development and motivation. I feel as if my interview turned into a family visit and I enjoyed it immensely.

On August 22, 2005, I will be gainfully employed as the Serials Librarian at **Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University** in Daytona Beach, FL: a product of long hours of study in the MLIS program, many years experience in the profession, preparation for presentations, writing for publication, and an active involvement in the library world. For whatever you wish in life, you must work to achieve it. I will always remember this time in my life: the people who have helped make this possible, the belief of professors, coworkers and family, and the providence of a life filled with trials and tribulations. I have enjoyed writing this column through my years as a student at USC and now pass the baton to a new generation of professionals in training. **Heidi Hoerman** will be using this column to help her students understand the integral part publications play in their own professional development. **Katina** has asked me to move to a different column, so I will remain with you as I search for my place in the professional world. I will also attend the **Charleston Conference** in November, so look me up, say hi, and let me know what you would like me to explore in the new column. Thanks for continuing to read with us! 

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## Lost in Austin

by **Thomas W. Leonhardt** (Director, Scarborough-Phillips Library, St. Edward's University, 3001 South Congress Avenue, Austin, TX 78704-6489; Phone: 512-448-8470; Fax: 512-448-8737) <thomasl@admin.stedwards.edu>

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*"In literature as in love, we are astonished at what is chosen by others." — Andre Maurois*

In my last column, I mentioned that I had volunteered to read religious fiction for *ForeWord: Reviews of Good Books Independently Published*. When I wrote about the box of books that arrived one afternoon when I had come home early, I said that there were eight books in the carton but there were, in fact, a dozen. I still had them all read and rated by the end of March but by that time, another carton of books had arrived. The person in charge of the project confided that a **Sci Fi** reader had dropped out and asked if I could help. There were only eleven books in that box but before I could finish them, a small package of three books arrived, three works of translation. My job was to rank the three finalists for the translation award.

As I write this on a sunny, breezy, and cool Sunday afternoon in Austin (perfect weather anywhere), I have just finished ranking the three works of translation after finishing the reading last night. The winner, in my estimation, was a book called *Alamut* (Scala House Press), by **Vladimir Bartol** (1903- 1967), "one of Yugoslavia's leading intellectuals and the author of plays, short stories and theater reviews" (jacket blurb) who wrote the book in 1938. He

was criticized for not writing about his own country instead of Iran, the Iran of around 1092 C.E. If you read the book, in a smooth translation by **Michael Biggins**, you will understand why modern readers will find it interesting, even gripping at times, especially as you begin to realize why three young warriors are allowed to enter Paradise while still alive, the Paradise where heroes are greeted by virgins in a Garden of Eden.

The work of translation that I did not like had nothing, as far as I can tell, about the quality of the translation. The problem was the material. The book, *Sebastian's Arrows: Letters and Mementos of Salvador Dali and Frederico Garcia Lorca* (Swan Isle Press) contains some of **Lorca's** poems and color plates of works by **Dali**. **Lorca** and **Dali** will be remembered for their art and not for their correspondence. How could such renowned artists write such boring, pedestrian letters?

My opinion of the religious fiction has not changed since I last wrote about that genre as represented by my carton of books. The good books were good reads. None of the books will be remembered as worthy literature but that applies to most of what we read, even for those

of us who try to choose with care. What a loss if all we had to choose from were the novels listed on the syllabi of teachers of literature. Some of my favorite reading has, most likely, never even been mentioned in a formal class. I had some difficulty selecting the order of my four favorites from the religious fiction but I was finally successful. What separated those four books (only three got ranked) from the other eight was that it was the human condition of the characters and plot and not religion. But the religious angle was what drove the authors and although a couple of the endings were a little too pat, ending a novel satisfactorily, from the reader's viewpoint, may be more difficult than the beginning.

The most recent work of science fiction that I read before agreeing to be a **Sci Fi** judge was **William Gibson's Neuromancer** more than ten years ago when I was still enchanted by all things technological and **BITNET** seemed so necessary before it morphed into the Internet and became ubiquitous. The Internet and the Web are not passé but they are nothing more than work tools for me now, work tools that have probably made me more productive but I still miss those telephone calls and letters with interesting letterheads and stamps. The telephone is still used, thank goodness, so that there is still a personal element left in our business world.

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**Lost in Austin**  
*from page 70*

Email has sped up our written communication but it seems less personal and it has added an element of urgency to our correspondence that wasn't there when we relied solely on the U.S. Postal Service. I try to remember what it was like to put thought into a letter before neatly typing it, proofreading it, and folding it carefully into an envelope. No, I am not a Luddite, not yet, but a romantic that misses some aspects of our work of a quarter of a century ago or more.

But I digress. I was simply noting that it has been a long time since I read a work of science fiction, not counting the tons of hyperbolic praise and promise about the aforesaid Internet and World Wide Web. I had read some **Ray Bradbury** and others as an early teenager but it was never really my bag. And after reading the carton of **Sci Fi** sent to me for review, it is still not my bag and probably never will be given that my lifelong list of books to read contains a mere handful of science fiction titles and those, such as *Brave New World*, transcend classifications (science fiction, dystopian, sociology, belles lettres, etc.).

I have digressed again. What I have been trying to do is suggest that some of the science fiction (really a catch all for fantasy, science fiction, and others) books that I read were good reads and good entertainment. My favorite of the eleven that were sent to me was *The Monastery*, by **Seeth Miko Trimpert**. When I fin-

ished the book, I wondered if it deserved a category all its own. The book is and yet is not about time travel, it is about reincarnation but with a twist. The woman protagonist in the book is not appreciated in her 20th century life (we are still living in the 20th century despite the calendar and closing in on the 19th century socially and economically) so she begins a new life in the 14th century. She is brutally raped and left for dead, by a soldier with a conscience, at the gate of a monastery. To make a long story short... No, if I tell you any more it would spoil the book. It is not exactly **Snow White** and the **Seven Dwarfs** but it does have to do with a damsel in distress and a monastery full of monks who care for her and nurse her back to health. But while she is beginning this life within the monastery, she is still alive but in a coma, but with full mental powers, in the 20th century and the two women separated by six hundred years, are struggling to see which one lives and which one dies. Had I been the editor working with **Ms. Trimpert**, I would have removed the monastery section of the book and published it as its own story, for that is the interesting part of the book to me. If you believe in reincarnation and communication with yourself in past lives, you will enjoy this on a different level.

The others that I liked could be seen as religious or ethical allegories, one, *The Pocket and the Pendant*, by **Mark Jeffrey**, being ever so derivative of **Philip Pullman's** *Dark Materi-*

*als: The Golden Compass; The Subtle Knife; and The Amber Spyglass*. I sort of enjoyed *The City Built of Starships*, by **Meredith Sue Willis**, a story of good versus evil for the control of a colonized planet, although I sometimes, even at the end, could not tell who was good and who was evil. A better story about colonizing space was *Shivering World*, by **Kathy Tyers**. There is a lot of science (how good I cannot tell) as the colonists and the stakeholders debate the planets viability. *Singularity*, by **Bill Desmedt**, is as much an espionage thriller as a work of science fiction. *The Planet of Mortal Worship*, by **Donald I. Templeman**, is more religious allegory than science fiction — it is the Devil versus God. The bad people are depraved and used depraved, sexual, and scatological slang to show how bad they are. The longer the book went on (558 pages), the more tendentious and tedious it became but by that time, I was too far along to quit.



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