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Wandering the Web — Subcultures on the Internet: Part One

Column Editor: **Jack Montgomery** (Western Kentucky University) <jack.montgomery@wku.edu>

Column Editor's Note: *Since my college days, I have been fascinated with the history, presence, persistence and variety of subcultures in the greater American society. The word "Subculture" is defined as "a set of people with distinct behavior and beliefs within a larger culture. The essence of a subculture, that distinguishes it from other social groupings, is awareness of style and differences in style, in clothing, music or other phenomena [taste] a culture often contains numerous subcultures. Subcultures incorporate large parts of their mother cultures, but in specific instances they may differ radically. Some subcultures achieve such a status that they acquire a name of their own. — <http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subculture> [Jul 2004]"*

Over the years, I have realized that the Internet has provided for the development and expansion of subcultures in a manner impossible before its existence. Librarians need to be aware of and be able to access reliable information; hence this series of articles is designed to provide the librarian with sites with basically appropriate online content to recommend to patrons who have an interest in a subculture. This article is by no means exhaustive and is only meant to provide a starting point for your interest or research.

While the greater media tends to lampoon, ridicule and often demonize subcultures, featuring their most extreme expressions, I have sought sites that allow those within the particular subculture to define and explain their own experience and hence have excluded Websites that attack or denigrate them. It is not my purpose to take a particular side or critique any subculture but to simply present them as they present themselves. — JM

Hippies: The Hippy is not gone, but still trucking. <http://60sfurther.com/Home.htm> — A semi-commercial Website featuring a cornucopia of hippie related art, photography, fashion, books as well as short articles on music, politics, spiritual teachers, communes and links to anything you imagine related to this particular sub-culture. Please note that some files may not be suitable viewing for all ages.

<http://www.hippy.com/php/index.php> — An extensive Website featuring well written articles on a variety of topics from the German 19th century roots of the hippy and back to nature movements to modern politics and spirituality. The site features a historical calendar, reviews of music and books, chat rooms and advice columns. The finest site of its kind on this topic.

Neopaganism: the Goddess is alive and magic is afoot! Neopaganism is a blanket term for a large group of earth-centered and goddess-centered religious subcultures, each with its own myths, liturgy, rituals, distinctive dress, art, and

music. Many of these groups have sought, through research, to recapture and reclaim the pre-Christian cultures of old Europe, Greece and Rome. Neopagans now number over four million individuals worldwide and their particular religious expressions have legal status as religions in many nations including the United States.

Modern Neopaganism developed around the end of the 19th century and flowered after the Second World War as legal restrictions were lifted against witchcraft in England. Sadly, Neopagans in the US have endured a lot of the same stigmatization and religious persecution as other American religious minorities like the Quakers, Mormons and even Catholics have in the past. Neopagans, like other subcultures, convene at festivals and gatherings throughout the year usually centered around one of the ancient festivals of the lunar calendar.

<http://www.witchvox.com/> — Witchvox, is the extensive central clearing house to reliable, unbiased information on and about this religious subculture.

<http://www.circlesanctuary.org/> — The Circle Sanctuary began in 1974 developed as a non-profit educational center and nature preserve under the guidance and leadership of **Selena Fox** and it continues its mission to this day.

<http://www.neopagan.net/NeopagansBelieve.html> — An essay on neo-pagan beliefs written by one of the elders of the movement.

Goth Culture: Through the looking glass darkly. Beginning in the 1960s, and evolving out of the punk music and art scene the Goth subculture continues today worldwide with its own movies, music, clubs, fashions and art. Goths, like other subcultures, have their own standards of beauty and codes of conduct that apply to its members.

<http://www.goth.net/> — <http://www.religioustolerance.org/goth.htm> — <http://www.egoth.com/> — <http://www.darkwaver.com/subculture/> — These four sites contain extensive background information with links that will lead the researcher into the vast network of this often-misunderstood group. The [religioustolerance.org](http://www.religioustolerance.org) site is especially good for unbiased information and the final entry has an extensive dictionary of Goth terms and personal profiles.

Renaissance Fairs: Fore sooth me Lord and Lady! Renaissance or "Renn" fairs began in California in 1963 as a celebration of old ways and cultures and centered on the medieval fairs of Europe. Now with over 207 such fairs worldwide with millions of attendees, the Renn Fairs are almost mainstream. They incorporate fa-

miliar aspects of other subcultures such as cos-tuming, role-play, cottage industries and extensive research of the part of those involved.

<http://www.renfaire.com/> — Contains extensive background information on becoming involved in Renn fairs. A good place to start.

<http://www.faires.com/> — A wonderful directory of fairs, groups, merchants and everything else

<http://www.renstore.com/> — Although a commercial site, the Renstore gives a valuable look at the fashions and art of this subculture.

Science Fiction, Fantasy and Gaming conventions: Somebody beam me up!

SciFi conventions and the folks that attend them have been lampooned in the media in recent years but the conventions that celebrate Science fiction Fantasy and Gaming have maintained a loyal and dedicated following through the years. This subculture revolves around the interest in and literature/media surrounding science fiction and fantasy. There are as many interests as there are sub-genres of interest. The

conventions are the major avenue for community building, socialization, education and growth with names like Gen.con, Worldcon, Dragoncon and many others. A large number of authors, screenwriters as well as movie and television actors present programs and sign autographs for the fans.

<http://worldcon.org/> — <http://www.gencon.com/> — Two famous "cons" that are thematically focused on gaming and role-playing.

<http://www.dragoncon.org/> — Since 1987, Dragoncon is one of the largest of the Sci-Fi cons held annually in Atlanta, Georgia. Be sure to look at the elaborate costuming developed by some of the attendees.

Tattoo culture: Ouch, it does hurt! Tattooing is an ancient art of body decoration and modification that literally spans the globe in its scope. Over the past twenty years, tattooing and body modification have moved closer to the mainstream while retaining its sub-culture status by pushing the limits of style and sometimes good taste.

<http://tattoo.about.com/> — This site has basic information about tattooing health and safety issues.

<http://www.cool-tattoo.com/index.htm> — <http://www.tattoos.com/> — These sites have extensive history and background information on tattooing covering subjects like hygiene, flash art and connections to studios. Not all pictures are suitable for viewing by children as with most tattoo sites.

Rave culture: Let's dance till we drop. Rave culture developed in the U.K. during the

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short courses not only in information management but also basic software technical skills. These rooms could also be used by teachers for other purposes and during exam and paper writing periods the computers were opened up for general student use, adding to the number of terminals available.

- **Multimedia workstations.** The emphasis seems to be on campus integration, that instead of having disparate facilities on campus doing this sort of thing, a successful Commons bring all the equipment and staff who know how to use them together with everything else happening in the Commons — this is a one-stop shop for integrating multimedia information, technology, hardware, and learning.
- **Consultation stations.** In this case one-on-one reference and technology consultation sessions are integrated within the

Commons and not located outside it on another floor or area of the Library. These stations, moreover, are not seen just as the private property of library staff members but can also be used by teachers and TA's as needed — the library is not separate from the rest of the university but an integrated part of it.

- **Writing lab.** This is clearly a case where non librarians are integrated within the physical space where students are accessing and manipulating information instead of taking their printout or sending their paper to a writing lab teacher for help.
- **Extended hours.** The principle of integration here is integrating what can happen in the Commons with the life cycle of students who tend to do their searching and writing in the late afternoon and night, instead of the morning and early afternoon when classes are being held.
- **Lounge.** Students rest, eat, study, and play. The idea for lounges seems to be to integrate opportunities for resting, hanging out with friends, and studying within

the Commons. Interestingly, there is no mention of food in the **BYU** report.

Wal-Mart is an example of integration. Everything you want is in one location. Instead of going from one shop to the next, each with its own culture and cash register, at **Wal-Mart** you have a single integrated culture and you pay once. My library is like a small town or even a mall with all the needed services but it has lost the integration that exists in much smaller libraries. I still hope to get a new library to house the 100,000 or so new books we add annually, but I also want an information commons and I want to spread the principles that govern it across the entire library system. 🐼

Endnotes

1. The Free Dictionary by Farlex, "Common land" <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/common%20land>.

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1980s and is essentially a music and dance culture of events that feature primarily electronic music and extended dancing often to the point of trance. Maligned and suppressed for its tolerance of certain trance inducing drugs, the rave culture nevertheless is evolving into a more mainstream expression.

<http://www.rave-network.com/> — An extensive site with many links for research into the rave movement.

<http://www.ravelinks.com/> — Another extensive site with regional calendars and links to worldwide rave organizations.

Hip Hop culture: Beginning in the 1970s in America's inner cities, the Hip Hop movement began as a dance and music culture ostensibly by and for minority youth. As with all such movements, it has moved into the mainstream and become a billion dollar music, fashion and entertainment business while maintaining its various sub-cultural elements.

<http://www.rapworld.com/> — An excel-

lent starting place.

<http://www.hiphop-directory.com/> — Extensive links-page to other hip hop sites on various topics <http://www.b-boys.com/>, <http://www.rapstation.com/>.

Furries: Let me be your, Teddy Bear?

<http://www.interactive-websites.com/scripts/fuzzwolffaq.taf> — http://www.tigress.com/eisfuchs/furry_eng.html — <http://www.furtherconfusion.org/fc2005/> — I must confess, the Furry subculture, was one I knew nothing about until informed of its existence by a colleague. This culture began around 1985 and is focused on the love for and role-playing surrounding the concept of animals with human characteristics and intelligence. Although not a new concept in film and literature, this cultural expression evolved out of the SciFi and Gaming conventions environment. Some individuals even take the next step and begin to dress in full costumes for their events. The first two sites provide definitions and examples for the uninitiated and the third site is an example of an anthropomorphic or furry convention. There is even a subculture of the furries called "plushies." 🐻



YES...
all **APS**
journals are in
LOCKSS



15 Journals of the **American Physiological Society**
www.the-aps.org

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one another and one another's libraries. Not only is the personal comfort level higher and longer lasting, but the application of what is learned is more likely to be apropos."

Susan Campbell agrees. "ACLCP has always been about networking," she contends, "and that still goes on at almost all levels. It's a great organization, — probably the best of its kind. I cannot say enough good things about it. It has proved invaluable for librarians and staff here at **York College**." 🐼

Endnotes

1. This article was written with the collaboration of the **ACLCP 40th Anniversary Planning Committee, Associated College Libraries of Central Pennsylvania**, including **Jonathan Lauer** (Chair), **Doug Cook**, **Tom Duszak**, **Bernadette Lear**, **Steve McKinzie**, **Lawrie Merz**, **Sara Pike**, and **Ruth Runion-Slear**.
2. "Nine Pennsylvania Colleges Begin Library Cooperative Project." *Library Journal* 91 (1966): 2452.
3. "A Program for Sharing Library Resources Has Been Initiated by Nine South Central Pennsylvania Colleges." *Wilson Library Bulletin* 40 (1966): 903.
4. **Associated College Libraries of Central Pennsylvania**. ACLCP Home Page, 2005 [cited February 21, 2005. Available from <http://www.aclcp.org>].

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needed (or if present need be read). What all of these accounts have in common is that they are primary sources, that they document vanished ways of life, and that they were recorded by highly intelligent and skillful writers. They should be allowed to stand on their own merit.

*Gene Waddell is College Archivist at the College of Charleston, and he wrote **Indians of the South Carolina Lowcountry, 1562-1751** (Southern Studies Program, 1980) and **Charleston Architecture, 1670-1860** (Wyrick and Co., 2003).*