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Lost in Austin -- 102 Books

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the requirements. I have done some searching and I found that you have written many terrific articles. Would you be willing to be a writing partner/mentor for me through my first article? I have some thoughts on possible topics. Would you be interested? If so, when can we meet?"

What to Write About?

Next **Melissa** needs to find something she can write about. Ideally brainstorming would happen with her new partner, but she ought to go to the meeting armed with ideas. Good topics for first articles, and in fact for all writing, are (is) to keep it to subjects that you know about. **Melissa** needs to think over the projects she has worked on during the past two years. Was there any project that she subsequently learned from? Did she create a new process for accomplishing a specific task? She could think about what her experience was like for her as a new librarian during her first two years. What did she learn along the way? She could write about her learning process and how she might approach it differently, knowing what she knows now. Lots of library literature is about "How we did it here." The *How*, the *It*, and the *Here* then become the major parts of the article.

Where to send it? AND The initiation email to editors, what to say?

Melissa and her writing partner need to make sure they market their article ideas to a receptive and focused audience. The partner/mentor will most definitely have some ideas of possible journals, but searching the literature on similar topics to what they plan to write about will give them a list of possible journals to send their article to. Remember the rules of the publishing game: you can't just blanket the area with your article. You may only send it to one journal at a time. If one rejects it, then, and only then, can you send it to another. If one journal (fingers crossed) accepts it — then that is the journal your article will appear in and no other. Once the partners find a few journals whose articles interest them, they will need to leaf through a few issues and get a feel for the writing styles, articles lengths, and article topics.

Either before, during, or after, **Melissa** and her partner begin writing, they will need to contact the editor of the journal they choose to start with. Ideally they will introduce themselves, say that they are interested in writing an article for the journal and then present some possible topics for their article. They also need to ask about, or make note of the submission deadlines, length limits, and other important details for authors often shared by the editor, or found on the inside front cover of paper journals, or in a specific area of an electronic journal's Website.

Writing the article.

Writing with a partner brings all sorts of positive things to the writing experience. You have someone to share the work with; someone to work with, and against, for deadlines; and someone to bounce ideas off of. We find it easiest to split up the writing into chunks and then each partner takes some of the chunks to write the first draft of. Then drafts are shared and edited and then put together for a final read-through draft for both (all) partners. It

works best if people don't try to "own" their writing and focus on working together as a team, trusting each "editor's" perception of how something reads. Leave your ego out of the partner-writing process and focus on writing a useful, readable article that you are both happy with. Finally, give yourselves both preliminary and drop-dead deadlines. That way you will leave yourselves plenty of rewrite, and editing, or "perfecting," time.

Get started and have fun! Who knows — you may even write a book one day!

Lost in Austin — 102 Books

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Last year I read a lot of books, more than I have ever read before in a single year, 102. Many (most?) will laugh at that number. Is that the best you could do? That isn't even two a week. No, it isn't and it would seem that two a week ought to be the absolute minimum if one purports to be a serious and good reader. But to get even close to two a week, I neglected my personal correspondence and I all but ignored *The New Yorker Magazine* (except for the cartoons), *Atlantic*, *Harper's*, *The American Scholar*, and a couple of other magazines that regularly arrive in my mailbox if for no other reason than to prove to the postal carrier that I have a life beyond bills and promotional mailings. I still get the *New York Times* delivered every day and admit that it can take a chunk out of my reading day and often does.

But what I started to say was that among those 102 books, only one was ostensibly about librarianship but if I had to read just one book on my trade, I chose a good one. The book is *Perspectives, Insights & Priorities: 17 Leaders Speak Freely of Librarianship*, edited by **Norman Horrocks** for the **Scarecrow Press**. All royalties, by the way, go to **ALA's Spectrum Scholarships** so you get not only a good read for your money, you are supporting library education.

This is a book that could be opened to almost any page and become absorbing. Before you do that, however, you might have to get past the table of contents and the list of authors. I can imagine someone looking at the names of former **ALA** presidents (that category is well represented here) and losing interest simply because of public opinions and limited knowledge of these leaders. You might be surprised. I was and I know many of the essayists in this book and spent some pleasant time

in meetings with many of them last year. What surprised me — and it shouldn't have — was the passion that each one brings to the book and the profession.

I liked each essay in the book but want to single out one of them because it describes the approach to the book that **Norman Horrocks** (I wish that he had written a chapter himself) had in mind when he approached his authors.

Gillian McCombs, University Librarian at **Southern Methodist University**, called her chapter "The Fog of My Career: Some Reflections and Lessons Learned (with Apologies to **Errol Morris** and **Robert S. McNamara**." With a title like that, do you wonder that this is the essay I began with and that I want to quote?

"...everything is personal — your career, your life, your lessons learned. The deeper part of this moral is that it is impossible to separate out the professional from the personal. I am who I am. I have made the choices I have made because of who I am. And by extension, the lens through which I look back on my career and ahead to the future of the profession is also exquisitely personal." (p. 81)

McCombs's words could be a jumping off place for any number of literary excursions for me but career aside, many of the essayists talked about the importance of libraries in their lives. I realized that outside of my career in libraries, beginning as a university student, I had not really given much thought to the libraries in my past. Were libraries even that important to me growing up? I think that they were but perhaps not in any exciting or profound way as they were to **Richard Wright**, for example.

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I do not think of my mother as a reader but at one time she belonged to a book club because those early selections (**Frank Yerby** and **Christopher Morley** are two authors who come to mind and I still have that copy of *Kitty Foyle*) traveled with us from one duty station (my father was a soldier) to another and she subscribed to *Redbook*. My father always got the local papers, morning and afternoon, and subscribed to *Reader's Digest*, *Coronet*, and *The Saturday Evening Post*. And some door to door peddler had sold my parents a set of books (I still have them), one large pale green volume, one large yellow volume, and ten red bound volumes. The larger volumes contained articles of history, science, art, literature, how to draw, crafts, and lots of illustrations. There was a section for learning to read featuring Dolly the pony, a collie dog, two or three children, and a cat. There were lots of easy words in it but they were a struggle before I got to school and got some help. The red volumes contained nursery rhymes and stories such as *The Three Little Pigs*, *Goldilocks*, *Bozo the Button Buster* (a **Carl Sandburg** story) and excerpts from longer works. The higher the volume number, the harder the stories and the less interesting to me in my younger days.

Because I was interested in reading from an early age, the quality of the reading matter around me was less important than the fact that there were books and magazines around and I wanted access to them.

I didn't know about libraries until 1950 when we moved to **Camp Stoneman**, California, an Army post in the Bay Area (East Bay) near Pittsburg and Martinez. There was the post library, the school library, and the public library. As far as I know, I was in the public library only one time and that was when our third grade class walked over to it for a tour. I remember the card catalog, a woman explaining it to us, and a collection of stereo-opticons with three dimensional pictures of mountains and buildings. There was no blinding light, there were no precocious insights. We came, we saw, and we walked back to school.

The school library, given the date, was probably first rate. If a library was ever a haven, it was in third grade. When reading time came in class, I was sent to the library and allowed to read anything that I wanted. I remember finding books about Mexico and seeing the word **Popocatepetl** and a picture of the snow-capped mountain that went with it. There was an American family visiting Mexico and staying in a villa. The boy remarked to his sister that mangos tasted like the smell of paint. I was an adult before I could attest to the truth of that statement.

The post library was a regular stop during the summer. A group of us boys would ride our bicycles all over **Camp Stoneman**. There was not a lot of traffic because most of the G.I.s there were transients on their way

to Korea. They didn't need a car but those who wanted to could find something to read, perhaps for the last time in their young lives, for most of them seemed to be teenagers, just out of high school.

Anyway, we would stay in the library reading until it was almost time for the post theatre to open. I remember very little about the selection at the library but I liked the books of fairy tales and remember that my favorite was the **Classics Illustrated** version of the Arabian Nights with the magic lantern and Ali Baba and the forty thieves. The library was a regular stop, as I say, but our favorite places were the post theatre and the swimming pool. By arriving early, the G.I. in charge of the theatre would let us boys (we were eight years old) in free (it was a matinee) as long as we sat in the front row. As we moved to the entry, someone was sure to say, "Hey, kid, don't join the Army when you grow up." That was heresy to Army brats. We were sorry that we weren't old enough to go fight the Communists ourselves.

From California we moved to North Carolina temporarily while waiting for my dad to find quarters in the Territory of Alaska. It was at **Woodrow Wilson School** library in Kannapolis, North Carolina that I hit my stride as a reader. I'll bet that I read every **Bobbs-Merrill** and **Landmark** biography that the school had. Most of the biographies, as I recall, depicted famous people when they were young. They were not lengthy books, especially the **Bobbs-Merrill Childhood of Famous Americans Series** bound in library buckram with titles like *Abigail Adams: Girl of Colonial Days*; *Thomas A. Edison: Boy Inventor*; *Tom Jefferson: Boy in Colonial Days*; *Young Audubon: Boy Naturalist*; *Betsy Ross: Girl of Old Philadelphia*, and so on. At nine and ten years of age, I discovered vicarious living that was every bit as good as the radio serials that dominated weekday evenings after school in California and maybe better because I was reading about real people and not made up characters on the radio and in the movies.

We moved to Alaska in September of 1953. The **Big Delta Air Base** that became **Ft. Greeley** while we were there, was where the Army trained soldiers for cold weather combat and where it tested arms and clothing for arctic conditions. It was a small post in the interior of Alaska where indoor activities are highly valued during the winter months, that is, most of the year. It was at that small (it had to have been tiny now that I think about it) library that I developed a feeling for the library as place. It was close and cozy and was well-stocked as post libraries tend to be. It was in **Big Delta** that I moved from the children's section to the adult section. I can't remember

a lot about the books that I read but they tended to be biographies (**Jesse James**, **Billy the Kid**) and westerns. My best friend was already reading **Thorne Smith** and **Mika Waltari** because that is what his mother read.

From Alaska we moved to Virginia where I attended the seventh and eighth grades and part of the ninth. I didn't even know where the **Warwick Public Library** was. I depended on the school libraries for **Howard Pease** and his tramp steamer books (*The Jinx Ship*, and *Secret Cargo*, for example) and for the sports books by **John R. Cooper** (*First Base Jinx* and *The Phantom Homer*) and **John R. Tunis** (*The Kid From Tompkinsville* and *Highpockets*). Someone gave me a set of **Hardy Boys** books and my sister got the **Nancy Drew** books. I read them all.

So far, libraries have been important but have not loomed large. It was not until we moved to Germany that my interest in literature was piqued and in the most interesting and ignorant way. I was a junior in high school and was in the high school library looking for something to read. *The Grapes of Wrath* caught my eye. Having taken Virginia history in the seventh grade, I thought that the book must be about the War Between the States, the War of Northern Aggression. It was about another kind of war completely but it was the most gripping thing I had ever read.

Soon after that, we moved to another post in Germany and that is when I fully appreciated our post library there in Karlsruhe, West Germany. I was more interested in authors than titles so it probably just seemed as if everything I wanted was there on the shelves for the picking. I went through every **John Steinbeck** that was there and loved each one. I also read lots of **Hemingway**, **W. Somerset Maugham**, **Philip Wylie**, **Aldous Huxley**, **John O'Hara**, and **James D. Farrell**. In those days, you signed your name on the card when you checked out the book and so you could readily see who had borrowed the book before you did. One of the teacher's in our high school noticed my name in many of the books that he checked out and took an interest in me even though he never had me in class. He helped me with some essays that I was writing (What German American Week Means to Me) and was the first person to make me aware of the connotations of words. He sent me small monthly checks my freshman year of college before I dropped out and went into the Army and then he sent me packages of books that broadened my horizons. He is now a retired history professor. I am still in touch with and still indebted to him because he represented the ideal to me.

The library as place was most important to
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me during my three years of Army service beginning with the **Ft. Dix Library** that I frequented after I finished basic training and was spending another eight weeks learning to send and receive Morse code. Not only could I check out books to read in the barracks, I could listen to music in the listening room and was able to attend a lecture on the poetry of **Robert Frost**. You will do lots of silly things when you are a lonely soldier.

My next station was Ft. Benning, Georgia and jump school. Even there I had a few brief hours to sit in the library and read **Thomas Wolfe** and forget for a while the heat and the physical and mental ordeals designed to make someone jump out of an airplane without a second's hesitation.

My favorite Army library was in Fulda, Germany. I spent more time there, physically, than at any of the other libraries and even had my correspondence school tests proctored there. I will not claim that I spent all my free time in the library and fellow members of the 84th U.S. Army Band probably didn't know that I went there at all. They were more aware of my commitment to bettering German-American relations by spending as much time and money as I could in the various night spots with names like "Atelier," "Palette," "Sofie's," and "The Hole in the Wall." It may not have been the best of times, but they were good times, and I have the list of books I read that year to prove it.

Those libraries and reading experiences did not directly lead me to becoming a librarian, even though I remarked more than once in high school that I wanted to have my own library one day, but they did help me get into college where that part-time job in the **Bancroft Library** led directly to an interest in becoming a librarian. And yes, it is all personal.

Bet You Missed It

Press Clippings — In the News — Carefully Selected by Your Crack Staff of News Sleuths

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Column Editor's Note: Hey, are you reading this? Your esteemed column editor would like to know what you think! Zip off a quick email to <pmrose@buffalo.edu>. Does BYMI fill your needs? Do you have any suggestions for changes? I'm listening! — PR

MAY AS WELL SWITCH IF YOU'RE LOSING THE FIGHT by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

When the big city Wi-Fi craze began to build momentum, large telecom and cable companies nearly had a cow. What they were charging \$40 a month for was now being slashed to \$15 or even free if you were in St. Cloud, Florida. Instinctively they tried to stop it through regulatory legislation shoved through state governments. But they lost at every turn.

So now that **AT&T**, **Cox Communications**, and **Time Warner** are seeing markets lost to **Google** and **EarthLink** they want to jump on the bandwagon.

See — **Amol Sharma**, "Companies That Fought Cities on Wi-Fi, Now Rush to Join In," *The Wall Street Journal*, March 20, 2006, p. B1.

YES, HUMANS CARRY MORE PARASITES AND PATHOGENS THAN DOGS by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

How do you cook alligator? Just how long can you keep sushi before serving? And can a document shredder be used to tear up tortillas, egg rolls and wonton skins for shredded tortillas et al. on dishes?

These and other vital health questions for restaurants may now get a rapid response at www.foodsafetyweb.info. There an elite lineup of microbiologists, chefs, restaurateurs and regulators from thirty countries are standing by to grapple with the complex world of food and disease.

See — **Jane Zhang**, "Today's Question: How Do You Properly Cook an Alligator?" *The Wall Street Journal*, March 20, 2006, p.A1.

Editor's Note: Some Bet You Missed Its had to be cut from this issue. Watch for more Bet You Missed Its in June! — KS

Issues in Vendor/Library Relations — 100 Chefs

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Among the various types of **Google** envy, some are a lot more prevalent than others. You can **Google** that term, in fact. ("**Google**," as our newly-made cliché has it, is verb as well as noun, and for all I know adverb, adjective, preposition, and every other part of speech.) If you do, you will see that the term mainly applies to businesses — direct competitors — who suffer **Google** envy because they wish they had thought of some of the things that **Google** thought of first. This is a relatively small group of people, of course.

Then there are those of us, such as librarians and library vendors, who develop and maintain online databases and interfaces, like **Google** does, and who envy the search engine company's resources because we are always being compared to **Google**. Why aren't your searches as fast as **Google's**? Why isn't your interface as nice as **Google's**? How come **Google** can bring out something new so quickly? Sometimes we see figures on the number of servers **Google** has — around 10,000, I think it is — or the number of soft-

ware engineers employed by **Google** — 1,000 or 2,000, maybe, but really, past a certain point, who's counting? If we had just a fraction of **Google's** resources, we grumble, we'd show them then. But we don't, and while it often feels as if we're competing with **Google**, we're really spectator-competitors, with a good seat to watch the show, but as if watching movies, with no chance to match up in real life with the amazingly beautiful actors and actresses on screen who might as well

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