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The Good Library Campaign and the Future of U.K. Libraries

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tronic, reference collection would ever be used in a way proportionate to its cost. This is hardly surprising, given that no library has had, until **Reference Universe**, possessed a tool to actually unlock the reference collection.

However, most on-the-desk reference librarians have been big supporters of **Reference Universe**. Using this tool maximizes the substantial investment the library has made in high-quality reference; they've worked "in the trenches" for years and are grateful to be able to offer more targeted assistance to patrons at the early stages of the patrons' research. **Thomas Mann**, of the **Library of Congress** and author of the **Oxford Guide to Library Research**, called **Reference Universe** "a godsend for reference librarians." That comment sums up the usual reaction of reference librarians to our product.

Print versus Online

I've been asked what I would say to a critic who argues that a resource such as **Reference Universe** is simply preserving an outmoded medium — print — beyond its usefulness. It's the old question of print or electronic. But to me, that's not even the right question, at least not in the realm of specialized reference. Rather, the question for serious librarians is: What is authoritative, and what is not? One of the main functions of any library is to help patrons separate the wheat from the chaff, and sometimes print reference works are the finest wheat. It would be a shame not to take full advantage of them. When one considers that there is little chance that the entire realm of printed reference will ever find its way online, an access tool like this becomes the only avenue of discovery. Ultimately, it's our hope that **Reference Universe** brings back a little bit of the serendipitous fun of roaming the reference stacks and seeing where the next good notion takes you.



against the grain people profile

Eric M. Calaluca

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BORN & LIVED: Born in Detroit, lived in Washington, DC most of my life, now live in Austin.

EARLY LIFE: A great Italian family. 5 boys, 1 girl. Lots of sports. My father was a Mechanical Engineer and my mother loved words. They gave me a love of structures and language.

FAMILY: Married early this year. My wife, **Samantha**, is a graphic designer, and now completing graduate work in psychology.

EDUCATION: B.A. and M.A. in Philosophy from the **University of Dallas**. Minored in Classics. Study of the ancients is the cure for worry... nihil novum sub sole.

FIRST JOB: Technical editor at **General Dynamics**. I got to see F-16s up close, which was cool.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: Started at **Chadwyck-Healey** in 1987. Left in 1993 to begin **Paratext**. **Bob Asleson** agreed to join with me in 1999. **Bob** is the most accomplished executive in our industry and also the most decent. I'm a lucky guy.

IN MY SPARE TIME I LIKE TO: Weekend soccer, golf, oil painting, travel, cooking with way too much garlic.

FAVORITE BOOK: *A Soldier of the Great War* by **Mark Helprin**.

PET PEEVES: "The students only want full text!" Since when was education synonymous with making things easier for students?

PHILOSOPHY: Philosophy students don't have 'a philosophy.'

MOST MEANINGFUL CAREER ACHIEVEMENT: It's a tie: **Reference Universe**, and developing the **Patrologia Latina Database** during my time at **Chadwyck-Healey**.

GOAL I HOPE TO ACHIEVE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW: Updating this from a small study in rural Italy.

HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: Those who understand libraries and love scholarship will really thrive; those who don't will do something else for a living.



The Good Library Campaign and the Future of U.K. Libraries

by **Tim Coates** (Management Consultant and Advocate for Public Libraries) <timcoatesbooks@yahoo.com>
Weblog: www.goodlibraryguide.com/blog

The last ten years in the United Kingdom have been "the *Harry Potter*" decade. If ever there was a star who encouraged children and reluctant book readers to enjoy life between the covers, it was **Harry**, in this series of wonderful books whose stratospheric popularity has inspired awe among everyone connected with books or the publishing industry.

So you would assume that public libraries in Britain have been flourishing during that time. What other institution, after all, could

better benefit from and encourage the fruits of the craze for **Harry Potter** than the public library? But you would be wrong. During those years book borrowing from British libraries has fallen from 420 million books each year to 250 million. The decline is continuous and relentless; at this rate, the graph hits zero in about 15 years' time. By 2020, British lending libraries will be a thing of the past.

Declining Book Collections

How has this come about? Book sales

have been wonderful. Market research shows that the number of people reading and enjoying books continues to grow and touches all corners of our society. Magazine sales are also strong — reading is increasing in popularity. But in Britain, a country long admired for its educational system and for its magnificent contributions to literature, library book collections have fallen, over the past decade, from 80 million books to 60 million books. Although funding for public libraries keeps rising, the

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portion spent on books has fallen from 12 percent to 6 percent. Books are no longer regarded as the lifeblood of the library service. We are told over and over again that “libraries are about a great deal more than books.”

Indeed, a report by consultants **PricewaterhouseCoopers** advising the British government in its quest to “improve life in communities” describes a “public library service” that is “focused on the optimum way of commissioning lifelong learning outcomes for local communities, rather than on traditional ‘bricks and mortar’ library services” and says that such a service “creates opportunities for radical new thinking on delivery vehicles within this sector ... [that encourage] a range of alternative providers, expertise, and new ways of working ... maximising resources on frontline delivery, and making the services much more responsive to existing users, and bringing in new users.”

So public libraries in the United Kingdom find themselves caught between two extreme alternatives. On the one hand there is the view expressed by the **PricewaterhouseCoopers** report, which says book stocks don’t matter because libraries are about seeking “learning outcomes,” and on the other there are those who say the decline in book stocks signals the end of civilization. And meanwhile, the book stocks keep on declining, so that when you go into a library nowadays, it may be that all you will find are some old dog-eared copies of titles you wouldn’t ever want to read.

The problem is that because in the United Kingdom libraries are funded by the government, and those funds are awarded without any reference to any measure of performance, it is possible to define what library policy should be without having to take into account the public response to what is done. If people don’t borrow books, no one necessarily investigates why, and so those holding the purse strings are just as likely to decide that society has changed and people no longer wish to use libraries as to recognize the real cause — that there were no books they wanted to borrow.

The Good Library Campaign

I have attempted, through the Good Library Blog (www.goodlibraryguide.com/blog/), to call attention to the terrible position public libraries (university libraries are another story; my efforts, I must stress, are focused on public

Rumors

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should be encouraged. As both producers of copyrighted works and users of orphan works, publishers are experienced both in administering and granting permissions as rights-holders and in trying to obtain permission from other rights-holders. The **United States Copyright**

against the grain people profile

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Tim Coates

BORN & LIVED: Old England.

EARLY LIFE: I am still in my early life.

FAMILY: Wife, **Bridget Cave**, two sons: **Sam** writes for *The Times of London*; **Ollie** is an internationally known cellist.

EDUCATION: **University College, Oxford; University of Stirling.**

FIRST JOB: Theatre designer.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: Managing director of **Sherratt & Hughes**, of **Waterstone’s** bookshops, and of the English book chain **WHSmith** in Europe; library management consultant.

IN MY SPARE TIME I LIKE: Reading and listening to my son’s cello.

FAVORITE BOOKS: 19th-century government papers.

PET PEEVES/WHAT MAKES ME MAD: Bad writing in official documents.

PHILOSOPHY: Keep trying!

MOST MEANINGFUL CAREER ACHIEVEMENT: *Patsy, the story of Mary Cornwallis West* published by **Bloomsbury**. I also hope I have made a difference to the standard of bookselling.

GOAL I HOPE TO ACHIEVE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW: UK public libraries have an even higher standard of service than that which has been achieved in commercial book selling. 🐶



libraries) have found themselves in and to provide a forum for people to discuss what is happening. Independent publishers and well-known authors such as **Susan Hill** and **John Cunliffe** are using the blog to bring pressure to bear on those in power. **Susan Hill**, in fact, has taken the issue to the national papers. An article that appeared in the *Guardian* on 11 September 2006 describes her as “accus[ing] senior managers of public libraries of abandoning their commitment to books and manoeuvring to turn library buildings into social centres” and quotes her as saying, “They have been actively trying for years to get rid of books and introduce almost anything else.”

But no one had the right to decide, arbitrarily, that books are a thing of the past. No one has asked the public how they feel about the matter, and whenever the **British Parliament** has expressed a view, it has certainly not been to this effect. No one would ever expect them to ask for books to be removed from libraries.

As a management consultant, furthermore, I take issue with **PricewaterhouseCoopers’s** misguided conclusions (not to mention the jargon-rich language in which those conclusions are expressed). There are perfectly sensible models for an efficient and popular public library service that make use of the supply chain methods used now in book retailing. Proper use of modern systems would substantially increase the numbers of books bought and the quality of the collections offered. Libraries are about books for reading, access to the best sources of informed information, and provision of places for private, dignified study and reading. They do not need radical new thinking on “delivery vehicles,” although they might need a few new trolleys — once they boost their collections a bit. 🐶

Office has recently recognized the problems of ‘orphan works’ that authors, libraries, and other institutions are seeking permission to reuse and similar issues are being raised in the **European Union**. As we all know, the astute **Michael Mabe** is CEO of **STM**. www.stm-assc.org/documents-statement-public-co

EBSCO Information Services is recognized in the sixth annual **EContent 100**,

EContent magazine’s list of the companies that matter most in the digital content industry. Providing services for the access and management of electronic journals, packages, and databases, as well as a provider of traditional print subscription services, **EBSCO** has appeared in the **EContent 100** annually since the inaugural list was published in December 2001. “Despite the steady march of consolidation and the rapid

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