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Bet You Missed It -- Press Clippings -- In the News -- Carefully Selected by Your Crack Team of News Sleuths

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the conversation. By then, the newcomers feel not so new and the original complaint is lost. This might take a couple of hours, a couple of days, even a couple of years. But, eventually, those who come back come back because at **Charleston** they've found a community; meaning, people they want to talk to.

Why is it that no other conference feels quite the same? In part, it's the city itself. If twenty-six years ago someone had conceived a library conference in Santa Fe, Santa Barbara, Austin, Asheville, Missoula, Madison, or some other small, interesting city, probably **Charleston** would still be striving for a head count of 600. But nobody did, and so **Charleston** is the one city that became a destination for a generation of librarians. The **Conference** doesn't move, the backdrop is always the same one. Not only do you arrive in **Charleston** knowing you'll find people to talk to, you have a good idea of where you'll talk to them. You know exactly what it will feel like.

The librarian who did conceive **Charleston** lived in **Charleston**, of course: **Katina Strauch**, on the **College of Charleston** library Website, "Head, Collection Development Department." Because the **College** was fairly small and **Charleston** itself fairly remote, travel dollars for librarians, twenty-six years ago, were scarce. Let's have a conference here, then, was her answer, and since then it's been others who've budgeted to spend money in South Carolina.

Another **Charleston** certainty is that you will regularly spot **Katina**, who has been at the center of every one of the twenty six, to make opening remarks in a too-perfect southern drawl, to walk around and make sure things are going as they're supposed to, to meet with conference planners, to ask questions, to answer questions, to introduce people, to be introduced, to welcome newcomers and old hands alike, to oversee crowd control, and in general to perform at once as hostess, constable, centerpiece, and CEO. Her dark features set off by jewelry and colorful clothing, the diminutive **Katina Strauch**, gypsylike and a bit exotic, would be hard to miss.

And so is the overall character of the **Charleston Conference**. What truly makes **Charleston** unique is that the personal stamp of its founder is all over it. With an awful lot of help from an awful lot of willing friends, she has created a twenty-six year vehicle where formalities quickly fall away, where conversation is valued over ceremony, and where a sense of community is prized above all. Where else to find that? Try to find it, say, tomorrow at your workplace, and then maybe you'll know for sure why it is so many people come back to **Charleston**. 🐾

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

Column Editor: **Bruce Strauch** (The Citadel)

Editor's Note: Hey, are y'all reading this? If you know of an article that should be called to *Against the Grain's* attention ... send an email to <kstrauch@comcast.net>. We're listening! — **KS**

IF YOU'RE INSECURE, NITPICK by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

C. Northcote Parkinson wrote, "The No Man has little to lose." Hence it's a safe harbor for gutless and domineering managers. Of course they pretend to be perfectionists protecting lofty standards that only they can see.

But the real impact is enormous inefficiency. It's not just the wasted time of doing things over and over before the boss gives approval because it's now totally his idea. Productivity is reduced to a crawl. First the abused staff will spend an inordinate amount of time trying to overcome objections in advance. But with 'no' still the answer the staff learns that trying hard doesn't matter because nothing whatsoever pleases.

See — **Jared Sandberg**, "Some Managers Make It Easy on Themselves With a Ready 'No'," *The Wall Street Journal*, Oct. 17, 2006, p.B1.

MALaise AT A FORMER HIGH FLYER by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

The "Peanut Butter Manifesto" is being circulated at **Yahoo**, a memo saying the company is spread too thin and even (from online dating to fantasy sports to weather) and calling for a wake up. The company suffers from slumping sales, slow revenue growth, talent defection and no particular focus.

Some **Yahoo** management argue that refusal to buy **Facebook** and **YouTube** is a sign of discipline. But a buyer of **Yahoo** advertising says **Yahoo** had the ability to do the **Facebook/YouTube** stuff faster and bigger than anyone else and flubbed it. Meanwhile **Yahoo** plunked down \$2 billion to build a search and advertising business and yet they're being trounced by **Google**.

See — **Kevin Delaney**, "As Yahoo Falts, Executive's Memo Calls for Overhaul," *The Wall Street Journal*, Nov. 18, 2006, p.A1.

IDLE MINDS IN CYBERSPACE by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

A post-modern economy finds it easy to produce solid objects answering real human needs. So it devotes its energies to elaborate fictions pandering to the public appetite for unrealities. The university is big business in America and plays a key role.

While universities contain departments of "useful arts," its dominant courses of study in the humanities are dedicated to uselessness and "remains fixed on that strange thing called scholarship, the utility of which has been neither definitively proven nor finally disproved." America produces more scholarship than the rest of the world combined.

Knowledge is used to make more knowledge, much unreadable, most unread. Gender studies and queer studies do not exist for ideological reasons but to provide new fields for journals, books and footnotes. "A modern university could be compared to an ant-heap, in which the library is queen, her swollen body constantly enlarged by the fertile scholars that cling to her, and surrounded and protected by the sterile bands of student soldiers."

Information technology, rather than making this "knowledge explosion" more accessible has drowned out understanding with noise. It treats reality and fantasy as equivalent.

See — **Roger Scruton**, "The Idea of a University," *The American Spectator*, Nov., 2006, p. 48. 🐾