

June 2005

Books are Us

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Recommended Citation

Robichaux, Anne K. (2005) "Books are Us," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 17: Iss. 3, Article 29.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.4898>

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Slate (<http://www.slate.com/>) This daily news magazine, which was formerly owned by **Microsoft**, was recently purchased by **The Washington Post Company**. A recent article discussed the fact that only the first four volumes of a new translation of **Proust's** *In Search of Lost Times* have appeared in the United States due to the passage of the **Sonny Bono Copyright Act**.

Blogging for Yourself

The best thing about trying to blog regularly on a particular subject is that it offers the opportunity to learn about that subject. **Cory Doctorow**, science fiction writer and European Affairs Coordinator for the **Electronic Frontier Foundation**, says of editing his popular blog:

... [O]perating "Boing Boing" has not only given me a central repository of all of the fruits of my labors in the information fields, but it also has increased the volume and quality of the yield. I know more, find more, and understand better than I ever have.⁶

Through blogging about issues in scholarly communication, we have learned not only a good deal about scholarly publishing but also about copyright, institutional repositories, and digital information. The exercise has allowed us to gain a deeper understanding of many of the factors at play in the world of scholarly communications. Moreover, since our blog is a searchable database, the information we have posted is always available to us, ready to be retrieved when the need arises.

Access Statistics

Although word-of-mouth reaction to the blog has been overwhelmingly positive, we would like to have an idea of the number of people the blog reaches. Unfortunately, even though we read monthly statistical reports, this can be difficult. For the first few months, the number of requests made to our server nearly doubled monthly. Since March 2004, the number of requests has been consistent, averaging around 800 per month. So what does this tell us? As **Jeffrey Goldberg** explains in his somewhat overwrought "Why Web Usage Statistics are (Worse Than) Meaningless," no inference about the number or identity of people reading

against the grain people profile

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FAMILY: Wife, **Felicity**. 3 year old son, **Liam**.

EDUCATION: BA and MA in English from the **University of New Hampshire**.
MLS from **Simmons College**.

FIRST JOB: Grounds keeping at a polo club in Massachusetts. First professional position was working as a bibliographer for **YBP Library Services**.

FAVORITE BOOKS: *My Truck is Stuck!*, *Bear Snores On*.

the site can be gleaned from these numbers.⁷ What we can tell is that that most of the requests being made are consistently coming from the **Georgia State University** domain.

Conclusion

In today's environment, it is not enough for acquisitions librarians to manage the day-to-day business of acquisitions. The ever-increasing costs of library resources combined with current budgets have brought the process by which

libraries acquire materials to the fore. This new attention has created an atmosphere of change, and acquisitions librarians with their unique perspective can be a part of that change. Communication is the first step in any successful change process. Users must be educated and staff must be made aware. Here at the **Georgia State University Library** the initial communication phase has taken the form of the "Issues in Scholarly Communications" blog. 

Endnotes

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Books Are Us

by **Anne K. Robichaux** (Professor Emerita, Medical University of South Carolina) <awkr7721@sc-online.net>

Column Editor's

Note: This column covers fictitious accounts of people in our industry — librarians, publishers, vendors, booksellers, etc. — people like us. All contributions, comments, suggestions are welcomed. — AR

The back cover of *The Librarian* (Nation Books, Avalon Publishing, 2004, ISBN 1-56025-636-2) by award winning author **Larry Beinhart** poses the question: "How did nebbish university librarian **David Goldberg** end up hunted by **Homeland Security** and on Virginia's ten most wanted list for bestiality?" That didn't entice me to check the book out of

our local library as much as the title and the thought this would be great for this column. But the book is entertaining, a thriller, and the descriptions of four librarian characters, including our action hero (not just "the keeper of the flame") did not disappoint.

One character, **Elaina Whisthoven**, is de-
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scribed as a lover of books, who wanted to serve humanity, thus she became a librarian. She "wore large glasses and had large curls that were always clean." She "lived like a nun on her meager starting salary" in a rented room. Thus we are introduced to the poorly paid angle, often paired with our profession. This same chapter goes on about the current political climate, decreased budgets that impact library services, and a chancellor of the university who thinks all volumes can be replaced "by a great cyber-library, one library for all, accessed from our home and office PCs," cutting down on the need for almost all librarians. Sounds more like truth, than fiction, actually. We learn this from our hero, **David**, as he is firing **Elaina**, feeling that he's "broken some delicate flower, snapped its stalk, and crushed its petals."

Both **Elaina** and **David** end up working for **Stowe**, a wealthy, powerful, politically connected man, who has a wonderful private library. **Elaina** starts there first because she's lost her job, then **David**, who takes **Elaina's** place, when she realizes her life is in danger. **Stowe** indicates there are "great secrets" in his library.

There is a wonderful description of libraries in general, describing them as "free places. They are clean, dry places in a stormy world. They are full of ideas and information. With all of that together, they tend to collect kooks and wackos and people who bring shopping carts with them, filled with conspiracy theories, even a university library with restrictions on access and with campus security. There are, after all, quite a few members of the faculty and student

body who have wandered off the deep end of the pier." Again, this sounds fairly realistic!

Another university librarian character is head librarian **Inga Lokisburg**, who has a thick accent (she came to the US as an exchange student from Norway nearly fifty years ago). She is a "crone, judgmental, and, by librarian standards, fierce." She apparently had been quite a beauty in her youth, her gray, brittle, and stiff hair used to be "sunshine braided down her back." We learn later that she has many reasons to despise the rich man, **Stowe**, who has feelings for her but also believes that she has put a curse on him. Dowdy librarian, with bewitching powers?

Our hero, **David**, informs us that "A librarian's job is to preserve and disseminate information." But he also sees himself as others some times see him, as "one of the spinster women," a "lowly librarian." Even so, **David** attracts the eye of a flirtatious beauty, **Niobe**, married to one of **Stowe's** henchmen, who sees the intelligent spy persona side of him. She asks him to tell her about being a librarian. **David** complies by comparing the profession with communism: "We're in the business of giving away knowledge. For free. Come in, please come, and take some knowledge for free, no, no limit, keep going, gorge on it if you want, no, it's not a trick... Librarians don't have a lot of status and we don't make a lot of money... so our ideals are important to us and the love of books and the love of knowledge and the love of truth and free information and letting people discover things for themselves and... giving poor people Internet access." Whereupon **Niobe** softly replies "You're a good man."

David is depicted as mild mannered, com-

puter savvy (among other things, he uses a **Palm Pilot**), crafty in using other's passwords and addresses to access electronic information, a thorough researcher, reputable, harmless, a man who "lives for records and documents." Other descriptions include **David's** desire to become "a man of action, of encounter, of wild face-to-face interactions, instead of a filer, a sorter, a reader, a keeper of the records of other people's deeds... a keeper of order." As the story unfolds, however, **David** becomes just that, a man of action, almost a swashbuckling hero, though afraid for his life: a "librarian on the run."

Another librarian in the story is **Susanne Cohen-Miller**, employed at the **Library of Congress**, whose voice is grating, whose life is an "opera of angst," who seems to be involved in one disastrous relationship after the other. She becomes a hero of sorts in the book, assisting **David** in his escape, escapades, and encounters with the bad guys.

From the product description at **Amazon.com**, "**The Librarian** is a frenetic, scary and hilarious thriller that goes deep into the dark heart of election year politics." **Barbara Bibel** in a **Booklist** review (also on **Amazon**) compares author **Beinhart** with **Carl Hiaasen** and **Elmore Leonard**, effectively employing "a combination of dark humor and frightening, outrageous plot twists that strike close to home in the era of the **Patriot Act**. Although the novel falls prey to some traditional stereotypes, especially in the portrayal of **Goldberg's** female colleagues, it is refreshing to encounter a political thriller with a librarian hero — not coincidentally a librarian, either, but one who uses his information skills to save the day." 