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Remembering Peter Banks

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Remembering Peter Banks

Column Editor: **Greg Tananbaum** (Consulting Services at the Intersection of Technology, Content, and Academia) <gtananbaum@gmail.com>

I am both sad and proud to be writing this essay in tribute to my friend

and colleague **Peter Banks**, who died in July after a struggle with colon cancer. I first came across **Peter** when he was running the **American Diabetes Association's** publications and posting regularly to **LIBLICENSE** as part of its ongoing open access debate. I was immediately struck by his intelligence, passion, grasp of nuance, and wit. In the years of our friendship, I came to see that these four qualities were at the heart of his essence.

In reading **Peter's** posts, it was immediately clear what a strong advocate he was for his readers. He cared fiercely that those in need of research, data, and opinions related to diabetes be able to get their hands on it without delay or struggle. For example, under **Peter's** leadership the **ADA** invested significant resources into "translating" academic findings into language understandable to the average diabetes sufferer. To **Peter**, the Open Access movement sometimes oversimplified the subtle considerations that went into association publishing. He was unafraid and unashamed to call out the very real costs of government-mandated dissemination, as well as what he saw as the limited returns such advocacy would reap. His manner in doing so was equal parts common sense, unassailable logic, and humor. It was once suggested on one listserv that society publishers often receive subscriptions from scholars interested in their journal's content but not necessarily supportive of the society's overall mission, and that this was akin to taxation without representation. **Peter's** response provides a good snapshot of his style. "A subscription is not a tax; it a choice to purchase information," he wrote. "You might as well make the argument that buying any **Kraft** product is a tax that forces you to support **Philip Morris** and, by extension, cigarette smoking. You have a choice: don't buy anything that's part of the **Phillip Morris** empire, and don't buy *Diabetes* if you feel that the **ADA** empire is guilty of something (like suppressing what you might see as the truth of low-carb dieting). Start your own journal of Low-Carbohydrate Science if you wish and if OA is as easy as you believe; no one is forcing you to buy *Diabetes*."

To focus on a single issue or position does not do **Peter Banks** justice, however. Long before we met, **Peter** was gracious enough to strike up an ongoing email correspondence with me, a relative novice in the space some 15 years his junior. We talked about all sorts of matters related to scholarly publishing. I had some grand ideas for how to facilitate broader, faster dissemination. Like any good mentor, **Peter** always validated my enthusiasm but offered unflinching constructive criticism of my ideas

and my approach. I remember talking to him about a big plan I had to align all the world's scholarly publishers within a grand common postprints service. He told me that it was a great idea, that he would be first in line with the **ADA** to support it, but that the challenges it faced were likely insurmountable. Then he told me *why* this was so, and how we might work together to see if we could prove him wrong. We did do the work, and it turned out he was right. But through the process I learned a great deal about hypothesis testing, coalition building, and distilling concepts down to their core benefits. **Peter's** patience and guidance served as the catalyst for that lesson.

It was some time before **Peter** and I got together face-to-face, and when we did it was in the **Francis Marion Hotel's** lobby. What better place to meet scholarly publishing's **Dorothy Parker** than in our equivalent of the Algonquin Round Table? We were scheduled to talk for fifteen minutes but sat for ninety instead. Much of the time was filled with breezy back and forth many miles away from the scholarly publishing realm. **Peter** was a runner, as am I. While he was a long-time east coaster, he retained a special affinity for the Bay Area, my home. He also was a bit of a political junkie, another interest we shared. It is a great blessing in life when you can find professional colleagues who so easily become personal friends. **Peter** fit the bill.

Over the ensuing years our paths continued to cross. In 2006, when **Peter's** tenure at the **American Diabetes Association** was drawing to a close, I tried unsuccessfully to lure him to **The Berkeley Electronic Press**, my employer at the time. His commitment to his family — his wife's psychotherapy practice, his children's final high school years — simply took precedence over a job he was otherwise excited to pursue. Shortly thereafter, we both jumped the fence and became independent consultants. We enjoyed exchanging war stories when we got together at last year's **Charleston Conference**. I had invited **Peter** to speak on a panel about upcoming developments in the space. His presentation, entitled "**Everything I Know about Scholarly Publishing's Future I Learned from iTunes**," showcased his typical mix of intelligence, passion, grasp of nuance, and wit. In it, he argued that **iTunes** provides a great model for the successful online distribution of information. He managed to inject wry and spot-on references to the *Free Culture Manifesto*, Coldplay, **Ralph Nader**, the **National Hockey League**, and **Tower Records** in order to further his premise. I left the session having jotted down several pages of notes and bursting with ideas. **Peter** had that effect on people.

When **Peter** was diagnosed with cancer this spring, he began keeping an online **Caring Bridge** journal. More than anything I could write, these entries speak to his character, his

values, and his spark. I am proud to have had **Peter Banks** as a friend, and sorry to have lost him so soon.

April 4: For the first time in my life, probably, I am trendy. Tony Snow, Elizabeth Edwards, Jonathan Alter, and me... all living with cancer. Though this is a trend I would have been happy to have passed by, you take what comes. Next stop: American Idol? With Sanjaya among the finalists, I can say that I have as much talent as some of the contestants (though, admittedly, not nearly as many hair style choices — more like one, really, the classic no. 2 next-stop-baldness cut).

April 7: I can't exactly wrap my arms around "an affliction born of love," which seems like God giving us so powerful a hug that he breaks our ribs and ruptures our spleens. Or gives us cancer. And yet there is a kind of gift from cancer. In the face of mortality, I have come to see that we live in a world of incredible beauty and love, but we can't see it until it is threatened and in danger of slipping away. I only wish God had given me a wake-up call other than cancer. A really good cancer scare might have done the job!

April 20: A good day. Until a few months ago, I would have had a lofty threshold for "good:" landing a fat new piece of business, dining at the Inn at Little Washington.... Today, though "good" is defined by small things: blue sky, a lunch with the company of good friends, a strong appetite (strong enough to finish both the entree and peanut butter mousse pie), sitting with Lucy and talking, having two wonderful children, the companionship of a faithful if flea-ridden and largely deaf old hound. In other words, "good" is all the things I should have been noticing for the past 30 years but often didn't.

May 14: I had a momentary panic today. On the plus side, it was about work, not cancer. On the minus side, it was about work, not cancer. I had to remind myself: Stop. Breathe. You will complete your work well without compromising your health. Save the fight or flight for what matters — or, better still, don't get into fight or flight at all. It's not the saber-tooth tiger trying to outrun you; it's just a momentary work pile-up. I spent 20 years in an office with the maximum possible sick leave piled up for years, never taking a sick day unless I couldn't drag myself in (maybe 10 days in 20 years). In the end, that work-above-all spirit wound up benefiting me not in the least — and stealing time from family while delaying my recovery from bouts of the flu and other illnesses (which I probably spread to my colleagues.) Perspective is one of the "gifts" of cancer. (My definition of "gift" has acquired a more complex side.) I love my work and working with my clients. But allowing work to become corrosive — especially now — benefits neither them nor me.

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Take a closer look at....

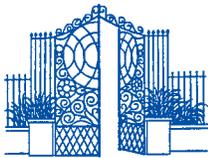
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Rumors

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approximately 30 books a year with emphasis in anthropology, archaeology, Middle East studies, Western U.S. history, and Utah history. Other strong subject areas include linguistics, Native American studies, Mormon studies, literature and poetry, the natural environment, and outdoor recreation. The active backlist is approximately 350 titles, with annual net sales around \$750k. Active series include, *Foundations of Archaeological Inquiry*, *Anthropology of Pacific North America*, *University of Utah Anthropological Papers*, the *Agha Shahid Ali Prize in Poetry*, and the *Utah Series in Turkish and Islamic Studies*. Distribution and fulfillment operations are through the **Chicago**

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June 22: I used to hate the phrase "Living with Cancer," which our local hospital uses for its programs and services. I use to think that the phrase prettied up the condition too much. Now, however, I've settled into it. I am not cancer and won't be defined by it, but it is part of my life now. It has taught me things that I ignored for many years — the pleasure of friendship, the beauty of nature, the sustaining power of someone's call or note. 🌸

Distribution Center. Wow! Sounds exciting! And challenging!

www.uofupress.com/Careers/

And speaking of **Margaret Landesman** <margaret.landesman@utah.edu>, she is traveling with her husband **Bruce** in Europe and just wrote from Krakow! She was enthralled by the **Jagiellonian University Library** and wanted to do an interview but that didn't happen ... yet! Anyway, curious, I went to ... **Wikipedia** (sorry all you naysayers out there) and learned that in "1491 Copernicus enrolled at the Kraków Academy http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jagiellonian_University (now **Jagiellonian University**), where he probably first encountered astronomy with the professor **Albert Brudzewski** http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Brudzewski. This science soon fascinated him, and he began compiling a large library of books on the subject. Copernicus' library was later carried off as war booty by the Swedes, during "The Deluge" http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Deluge_%28Polish_history%29 and is now housed in the **Uppsala University Library** http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uppsala_University_Library." Gosh! What you don't learn out there on the Web!

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jagiellonian_University

We interrupt this **rumorcast** for an important announcement — **Cris Ferguson**'s <cris.ferguson@furman.edu> and husband **John Larkin**'s baby is here! He came 12 days early. Yes, it's a HE! They were expecting a little girl but — surprise! **Cullen Fredric Larkin**

was born at 1:01 pm on Tuesday, August 28th and weighed 7 lbs, 8 oz. **Cullen** is a Gaelic name that means handsome and, appropriately, **Cullen** has plenty of beautiful blond hair. We will be excited to see **Cullen** (and his adoring parents) in Charleston in November!

And an exciting announcement from the **Addlestone Library** at the **College of Charleston**! The Special Collections department has acquired a 1502 Aldine first edition of **Herodotus' Histories**. Considered by many to be the first great prose writer of western civilization history, Herodotus documented the origins of the Greco-Persian wars, which took place in 490 and 480-79 BC. This Aldine edition is the first printing of **Herodotus** in the original Greek and one of only 25 in existence. Being of Greek extraction myself, I was fascinated to see it "in person" and to try to read some of it! Hoo-ha!

www.cofc.edu/~library/friendsofthelibrary

Royal Swets & Zeitlinger's current group of shareholders have agreed to sell 100% of the shares in the company for an undisclosed amount to the Dutch-based investment firm **Gilde** with participation from Swets' executive management. After several consecutive years of very strong performance, and seeing the company well positioned for long term growth, the current shareholders of **Royal Swets & Zeitlinger** decided earlier this year to sell their equity holdings. "We are immensely impressed with how **Arie Jongejan**, Swets' CEO, and his team turned the company around to its current state of robust financial health", said **Roelof Prins** of **NPM Capital**, one of Swets' major institutional shareholders. **Boudewijn Molenaar** is the Managing Director of **Gilde Buy Out Partners**. As we all know, **Swets** builds on more than 100 years of experience and has more than twenty offices around the world. **Gilde Buy Out Partners** has funds under management in excess of EUR 1.0 billion. It is a mid-market buy-out investor with a geographical focus on the Benelux, Germany, France, and Switzerland. They have offices in Utrecht, Paris and Zurich.

www.gildepartners.com

www.swets.com/

Speaking of **Swets** — **MyiLibrary Ltd** and **Swets** are partnering to enable customers to access eBooks and electronic journals from one point of access. **MyiLibrary** provides access to more than 70,000 eBooks. **Swets-Wise Subscriptions** provides services for the management and procurement of journals. The first offering of combined services between **MyiLibrary** and **Swets** is expected to launch in September of this year. (that's now!) **MyiLibrary Ltd.** is an **Ingram Digital Group** company.

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Paul J. Crecca, Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, will be assuming the role of Interim-Chief Executive Officer and Interim-President of **Hights Cross Communications, Inc. (HCC)**. **Mr. Crecca** had

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