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## Letters to the Editor

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## Letters to the Editor

Send letters to <strauchk@earthlink.net>, phone or fax 843-723-3536, or snail mail: *Against the Grain*, MSC 98, The Citadel, Charleston, SC 29409. You can also send a letter to the editor from the ATG Homepage at <<http://www.against-the-grain.com>>.

### Dear Editor:

Thank you, guest editors **Rick Lugg** and **Ruth Fischer**, and all the contributors for an informative June issue about virtual approval plans and the changes in book selection due to technology, the Web, and continuous developments in the industry. I would like to note, however, while **Blackwells** pioneered the capture of Table of Contents data in the mid-1990's, **Majors Scientific Books** offered the same service to its health science library customers in the mid-1990's as well. **Majors** introduced the idea of being able to edit approval plan selections online in the late 80's, creating a foundation for their virtual approval plan now available through their Website ([www.majors.com](http://www.majors.com)). It is my understanding that **Majors** is experiencing a miniscule return rate which would indicate that their virtual approval plan process works well. **Majors'** Table of Contents online database (**TACO-Line®**) is accessed by a small "taco" icon located under the title on its Website.

Future enhancements to any distributor's virtual approval plan will be determined in large part by the questions posed by **Stephen Pugh** (p.34) regarding cost-effectiveness, timeliness, viability and usefulness. However, once a basic virtual approval plan foundation is built, enhancements could easily follow, such as adding links to other formats and to other titles by the same author. Needless to say, publishers are the ones to determine accessibility to both chapters and full text, in particular prior to publication. (In some cases chapter information is already available at [majors.com](http://majors.com).) **Majors** plans to add new services and products in the near future, and information about them will be available on **Majors'** Website.

Sincerely,

**Anne K. Robichaux**

(Prof. Emerita, Medical University of South Carolina; Consultant, Majors Scientific Books, Inc.)  
<AWKR772@Charleston.net>

### Dear Editor:

I was surprised by puzzling omissions in **Bob Nardini's** current article about **Cornell's** collaboration with its ILS vendor, **Endeavor**, on the latter's **ENCompass** product. Given that **Mr. Nardini**, my former mentor and esteemed colleague, represents the vendor point of view (admirably and with aplomb, and always with insights into the library side of things, too), it was astonishing for this reader to find nothing about the ILS vendor's ideas

or opinions about said partnership. Did **Mr. Nardini** not interview the vendor? Did the vendor not want to be interviewed? This, in and of itself, would be interesting. Further, the mention of the faculty member asked to leave the discussion was particularly piquant and of great potential interest to **ATG's** audience. I am guessing this was **Dr. Van de Sompel**, or one of his associates, **Mr. SFX Himself**. Most, if not all of **ATG's** readership probably associate **SFX** with **Ex Libris, Endeavor's** competitor.

Wouldn't the issues around this twist be a great read in a publication whose name is, after all, "Against the Grain"???

**Dena J. Schoen**

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### From Bob Nardini — Dear Editor:

My thanks to **Dena** for providing a chance to learn a bit more about high-stakes campus research, a setting not unknown, these days, to some librarians. Among the people imagining and creating new online worlds for the rest of us to inhabit, no surprise that some such researchers can be found in the Computer Science department at **Cornell**. When librarians at **Cornell**, or at any research university, are likewise attempting to translate one of these futuristic visions into something that will actually work, today or maybe tomorrow, it will happen that people representing competing visions—and perhaps linked to competing commercial interests—occasionally find themselves in the same meeting, and so act out an instant case study in how a university's ideal of free exchange of information might collide with the need to protect information that is proprietary.

I only wish I could offer a story as "piquant" as it might well have been, with **Herbert Van de Sompel**, creator of **SFX** dynamic linking, storming from the library to burn away his anger with a long, brooding walk above one of the spectacular gorges which cut through the **Cornell** campus.

But I can't. In fact I learned it was not **Van de Sompel** at all, or anyone working directly with him, who left the room when **Endeavor** came calling. The real story is in effect the same one, though, since it was a Computer Science department researcher involved with a different competing technology, not with **SFX** (competing, that is, with **Endeavor** development), who was asked to leave. In the interest of accuracy, while at the expense of drama, I'm bound

to report also that when leaving the room, he left in all politeness.

A denouement: **Herbert Van de Sompel**, while not the man who left the room, has left **Cornell** altogether, after a short stay of some 18 months; again, not unusual in this high-stakes world. The man who did leave the room later left the Computer Science department too. He now works for the library, in fact, and can stay for all the meetings.

**Dena** is quite correct that I emphasized the library role in the joint development of **ENCompass**, at the expense of **Endeavor's** role. Although I did in fact speak to **Endeavor**, and might certainly have said more from that perspective, I chose to highlight the library end of the relationship. That was because the benefits and costs to **Endeavor** seemed straightforward enough—clearly benefits for the most part, a core of crack testers and better marketing than could be bought. The library's position seemed to me the more interesting, because it was the more ambiguous. Nothing proves that more effectively, I think, than the incident that didn't happen, but that might have happened, when **Herbert Van de Sompel** was asked to leave the room.

**Bob Nardini**

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### Rumors

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Was recently in **Amsterdam** for the **Fourth Fiesole Collection Development Retreat** inspired by **Mario, Michele** and **Barbara Casalini**. The Retreat, cosponsored by **Elsevier Science** and **Erasmus**, was incredible and a lot of the papers are loaded on the **Casalini Website** <http://digital.casalini.it/retreat/>. If y'all want more information about the **Fiesole Collection Development Retreats** write me at <strauchk@earthlink.net> or **Becky Lenzini** at <rlenzini@charlestonco.com>.

And speaking of **Erasmus**, I was excited to learn that the co-owner of **Erasmus**, **Sasha Brunsmann**, worked for **Richard Abel & Company** in its Amsterdam office back in the seventies. **Sasha** owns **Erasmus** along with **Kurt Tschenett**. **Erasmus** was established in 1934 in Amsterdam and has become one of the leading library suppliers in Europe. <http://erasmusbooks.nl/>. **Dora (Biblarz)**, <biblarz@asu.edu> this sounds like another interview possibility for your **Richard Abel** book!

And the wonderfully fabulous **Dirk Raes** <dirk@erasmusbooks.nl> has been appointed Assistant Director of **Erasmus**! Congratulations, **Dirk**!

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