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## @Brunning: People & Technology

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of both young and older patrons drawn by this new atmosphere. Libraries in K-12 and higher education are now getting into the act, first by supporting increasing research and courses on game design and the use of games in education, and then more directly — public library style — by facilitating gaming events and even collecting and circulating the games themselves.

Libraries need to become what **Neiburger** calls “platforms for the community.” They need to “reinvent themselves...by providing unique user experiences.” Patrons (young and old) require interactive engagement and should see the library as an active place for involvement. Games do this. Academic libraries, with their unique positioning and perception as curriculum support, can use expertise in game techniques and research for teaching and promotion. They can become the “go-to” source for teaching faculty and students. Interactive engagement is the key to maintaining and improving relevancy.

When I walked into that hotel lobby with my stylish Russian hat, I was as excited as I had ever been in my life. I anticipated learning how to immerse myself in library gaming and be paid for it. How cool is that? Incredibly, the experience taught me much more than I expected. Turns out this gaming and libraries phenomenon is emblematic of a cultural paradigm shift for libraries. It’s about the future of what libraries are and what they do. Who knew? Gaming is just the biggest (multibillion-dollar) example of how they are going (or should be going) about it.

I think I owe that cabbie a bigger tip.

### Postscript

Two years after **Metropolitan Library System’s** groundbreaking **Symposium on Gaming, Learning, and Libraries** the **American Library Association** took over the reins (still under the able direction of **Jenny Levine**), and the conference became the **ALA TechSource “first annual” Gaming, Learning, and Libraries Symposium**. The last two such conferences were still held in Chicago, though in a western suburb at a much easier-to-pronounce hotel name and in a much warmer month. For the record, I attended without my Russian hat. 🐻

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*Starting in the September issue of **Against the Grain**, I will begin writing a column entitled: “**Engaging the Incubator: Media Minding a Library.**” The concept is to consider, explain, rant and rave (and even review) all types of non-print media as to collection development, deployment, utilization and effect on and from the library. An issue to be addressed is the general library “paradigm shift” that is becoming necessary as a result of engaging this media. I am using the term “media” to basically mean anything that does not require ink as an interface. This includes videos, streaming technology, games, audio-books, eBooks, e-everything, blogs, social media software, mobile devices and anything that lights up, bleeps, or uses electricity to power its interface or make it work. See you again in September. Viva La Revolution! — JS*

## At the Only Edge that Means Anything / How We Understand What We Do

by **Dennis Brunning** (E Humanities Development Librarian, Arizona State University) <dennis.brunning@gmail.com>

### Not in Your Browser — Rolling Stone Magazine Cover to Cover

A 60th birthday brought **Rolling Stone Cover to Cover**, the DVD archive of the music and counterculture magazine, 1967-2007, into use here @Brunning.

Being older than a rock era magazine isn’t cause to celebrate. But a chance, drink-in-hand, rear-end in Lazy Boy, laptop deployed — to revisit youth, drugs, and rock and roll is indeed celebratory.

*Rolling Stone* commissioned **Bondi Digital** to present 40 years of **Jan Weiner’s** rock icon, a magazine that helped define rock and roll as we know it. Now we can know it digitally.

Although named after **Mick** and **Keith’s** enterprise, *Rolling Stone* first issue stars **John Lennon**, its patron saint. **Lennon** made news and noise in *Rolling Stone’s* pages; who can forget the stunning cover of **Lennon**, nude and in fetal position snuggled against **Yoko (RS, May)**.

This is the first page the **Bondi Reader** displays after installation. Disc one launches the software and search engine; from there you have the now-expected disc-swapping exercise to access page image. Ought to be in a browser, sure, but there is a certain pleasure in owning your own copy. It’s like you have the library’s periodicals room.

That said, you have to love microfilm to appreciate **Rolling Stone Cover to Cover**. What you see is much like what you see with microform — a photograph. With software controls you can zoom in or out but the action is like positioning the film for good viewing.

Ironically, fussing with image position and magnification, familiar to everyone with even passing use of a microfilm reader, has its equivalent in DVD readers.

It takes you back to periodical stacks of public and academic libraries. Use for research, use for nostalgia. Use for good reading. Ponder how far we’ve gone?

### Your links:

<http://www.covertocover.com/support/>  
<http://bondidigital.com/>

### Google Observed...

There is no shortage of books about **Google**. Early reports included **John Battelle’s** insider look, “How **Google** and Its Rivals Rewrote the Rules of Business and Transformed Our Culture” which was all roses and no thorns. “What Would **Google** Do?” by **Jeff Jarvis**, along the same lines profiled **Google** as not

only a new technology but a new way of doing business — even of thinking. **Ken Auletta**, the *New Yorker* writer and reporter, took a more measured approach to the behemoth, agreeing with **Battelle** and **Jarvis** but cautiously suggesting the “end of the world as we know it” brought about by **Google** may not be the total deliverance we thought. But it wasn’t all bad either; we are “**Googled**.”

Recent times have not been as good for the company. **Google** just lost its case against copyright as we know it by **Judge Denny Chin’s** ruling against the settlement. **Google** is now in just about every court in the world waging one form of litigation or another on privacy, data security, and search equity. It’s taking some lumps that weren’t recorded in the **Battelle, Auletta, or Jarvis**.

Three books in the last year or two set the tone and outline the shape of things to come for **Google**. **Nick Carr**, who keynoted at the recent **SLA** conference in New Orleans, writes in the “The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to our Brains,” the Internet, led by **Google**, is filtering how we think at the neurological level. Because **Google** is all about immediate relevant results in a sea of data and information, it has promoted, with its ingenious algorithms that reward popular pages, a sugar high when it comes to what we want to know and consider knowledge. There is no depth to researching on the Internet — only information spread shallow across a huge sea surface of data.

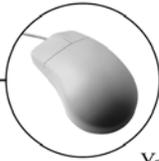
A more comprehensive social, historical, and cultural analysis shows up in **Siva Vaidhyanathan’s** *Googlization of Everything: Why We Should Worry*. **Vaidhyanathan’s**, media studies professor at **University of Virginia** and noted **Google** “Gadfly,” got an inside look at **Google** through interviews with employees but he also interviews everyone else who writes about **Google**. For librarians his analysis is thorough — walking us through where **Google** fits in the scheme of what we do for a living — searching, finding, and curating information in books, journals, and other important documents. He is especially concerned about the book project, whose impetuous scanning of millions of books and calling it the digital library for all time, ignores copyright, vetting information — all the achievements of publishing and its relationship to knowledge. Stay tuned, we hope to have an awesome interview with the author in at some point this year.

The latest entry into the **Google** slam is **Steven Levy’s** “In the Plex: How **Google** Thinks, Works, and Shapes Our Lives.” And it is less critique than a first-hand look at how **Google** got to where it is as a business — and what it may face, as we say, “going forward.”

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THE NICEST PEOPLE IN THE BOOK BUSINESS

## @Brunning: People & Technology from page 68

Where earlier insider looks focused on founders **Sergey Brin** and **Larry Page**, **Levy** broadens our understanding of the Dad role of **Eric Schmidt**, who just got relieved of duties this month, and the army of young engineers. **Levy** details what it was like to work on “Internet time” that characterized **Google’s** steep ascent to world-class company and dictator of things online. He also suggests that **Google** had its share of luck — of being there at the right time — a time which may be running out for the company.

Tinged with irony and most fun is **Levy’s** critique of **Steve Jobs** and **Google**. As we know, the warm fuzzies of **Google** and **Apple**, with **Eric Schmidt** on **Apple’s** board, ended when **Google** announced it would compete with **Apple’s iPhone**. As **Apple** quickly became **Google’s** rival (and vice versa), **Jobs** summed up **Google’s** mission “Do no evil” simply as BS.

Now **Levy** likes **Google** — you have to write about it from inside the Plex. But he couldn’t write the real story without detailing how **Google**, like any competitive and driven company, did not deal “in an up-front manner” with its partners, rivals, and the little companies that got in its way. From those outside the Plex looking in the motto should be “Cave **Google**.”

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<http://battellemedia.com/>  
<http://www.googlizationofeverything.com/>  
<http://www.roughtype.com/>  
<http://www.stevenlevy.com/>

### Where the Wild Things Are — Always More on the eBook...

We’ve managed in the three years of **Amazon’s** transformative **Kindle**, to have maxed several times the allotted devices to download books. The would be **Kindle First Generation**, **Kindle Third Generation**, **Blackberry**, **iPad**, **iPhone**, and desktops. That is, until the limit of five is reached. Add online management to the daily task of reading in these Internet times!

You’d have to be living under a rock — or have your own compound in the Northwest Provinces of Pakistan — to remain unaware of big changes in publishing. Kind of puts librarians in a spot so well described by our detractors and troubled in our own conversations. Wither books, wither librarians?

Developments in the industry and the courts suggest — not so fast, ye who would bypass the librarian. In New York’s Ninth District Federal Court, **Judge Denny Chin** ruled against the

deal struck by **Google**, the **Writer’s Guild**, and the **Society of American Publishers**. To their question — can we digitally scan books out of print but in copyright and then distribute them without an author’s permission — the judge said, not on my watch. Go to **Congress**.

On the other end of the eBook who-gets-what spectrum is **Amazon’s** Library Lending program. You can now check out some **Kindle** books from some public libraries. And on some **Kindles** you can enjoy special offers, perhaps from your own library?

**Amazon** took its sweet time — where is Internet time when you need it? — to come up with a lend-lease program for public libraries. Partnering with **Overdrive**, the book distributor e-jour for the public library reading public, you can now download books from participating (and paying) libraries for a period of time. Details are sketchy at the moment, but mere intent on **Amazon’s** part defines a company ready and able to exploit all its markets.

And the **Kindle** with Special Offers? What **Amazon** means is advertisements. For a **WIFI Kindle** and less than 25 bucks, you can pay forward to **Amazon** and its retailers with your clicks on ads or your participation in crowd-sourcing all sorts of things. For example, you can experience various “start” pages and vote for the ones you like, the winner playing on your **Kindle** whenever you are within a **WIFI** range.

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Oscypek is my favorite cheese. Crafted from salted sheep's milk by the farmers who reside in the Tatra Mountains of Poland, this cheese has been part of the region's culture since the 15th century. The cheese is hard, cuts like a firm butter, and has an exquisite design stamped into the smokey rind. Sprinkled along **Krakow's** Rynek Glowny Central Square are the vendors. Their carts are decorated with stacks of this delicious delight. When I visited Poland 18 years ago, I believe I consumed my weight in oscypek. It was difficult to pass up any cart without a purchase. When Avondale Wine and Cheese opened in the Avondale Point area of West Ashley, Charleston, SC, the owner had an oscypek-like cheese made in New Jersey by a Polish descendent. I was transported back to the summer of consumption, but not completely, for the cheese made in Poland draws its unique flavor from the use of unpasteurized milk. Not an ingredient that is recommended in modern cheese making. Although the debate is renewing among current cheese artisans.

The connection of oscypek with a **Nobel Laureate** in Literature might not be immediately obvious, but is not as far afield as one might think. When I began sharing my goal of reading works by each **Literature Nobel-ist**, I received a copy of *Independent People* as a birthday present from a dear friend. An elegantly poetic, 482-page story about sheep and the life of **Bjartur** of Summerhouses who tends them. Most people equate sheep with the counting process of sleep, but this rich novel about owning and tending sheep in the harsh bitter Icelandic climate kept this reader in a constant state of page-turning. No sleep while **Laxness's** words envelope you in the minutia of housing sheep, tending sheep, searching for lost sheep. Till this day I find the words difficult to explain how the grit and grime of a shepherd's life, the life of his family, and the conflict between **Bjartur** and his daughter **Asta Sollilja** make for fantastic reading. The

fact that this piece of work helped secure his **Nobel Prize** may be all that one needs to say.

The Introduction to the novel is written by **Brad Leithauer**, an American poet and novelist who is currently on the faculty of **Johns Hopkins University** in The Writing Seminars. I took a minute to reread his words since it has been several years since I have cracked this spine. His passion for this novel covers the reader like a blanket buffering from a harsh wind. "There are good books and there are great books, and there may be a book that is something still more: it is the book of your life. If you're quite lucky, you may chance upon a novel which inspires so close a kinship that questions of evaluation become a niggling irrelevance.....And the book of my own life? **Halldór Laxness's Independent People.**" Wow.

**Leithauer** has immersed himself in every nuance of the novel and entices the reader like an amuse before a feast. His passion for this story inspired him not only to spend time traveling to Iceland but also to seek out **Laxness** himself.

**Laxness's** story begins with an Icelandic tale of sorcery, a history of religious worship and occult lore that haunts the land known as Winterhouses. The elaborate description of every tiny detail of the land — the ruins of an old croft-house, the marshes, the river, the view of the mountain crags — sets the stage for our introduction to **Bjartur** and the beautiful yet harsh reality of independence.

**Bjartur** is the protagonist of this story. He has struggled for years in servitude to the Bailiff at Rauthsmyri but now has the financial resources to make a down payment on his own land and is thus able to raise his sheep as a free man. Tasting the grass as if one of his own sheep, marking his territory from the highest knoll, dispelling the relics of the mythical lore that haunts the property, **Bjartur** declares,

"Damn me if I'll have names that are bound up with spectres of the past farm." The name Summerhouses is born, and his future as an independent man on this small knoll begins. "'Size isn't everything by any means,' he said aloud to the dog, as if suspecting her of entertaining high ideas. 'Take my word for it, freedom is of more account than the height of a roof beam. I ought to know; mine cost me eighteen years' slavery. The man who lives on his own land is an independent man.'" But the spectres are not exorcised by the renaming of the land and come to haunt every aspect of his freedom.

Although independence is an obsession with **Bjartur**, it is not shared by his first wife, **Rosa**, who was also a servant in the Bailiff's family.

Pregnant with the Bailiff's son's child, her parents wed her to **Bjartur** to hide the growing secret

from both **Bjartur** and the community. **Rosa** abhors the roughness and longs for the life in the "luxury" of the Bailiff's home that she traded for this marriage. Autumn brings the annual sheep roundup. **Bjartur** joins the men of the district for the ride into the mountains, leaving **Rosa** at Summerhouse with a gimmer, a young female sheep, as a companion. **Rosa**, heavy with child, hungry for meat, alone, and frightened by the elements, becomes convinced that the gimmer is possessed. Thus, she kills and eats the young sheep. Upon his return, **Bjartur** cannot find the sheep and is convinced that **Rosa** has set it free. He once again goes in search of his valued possession. Winter has now set in, and a blizzard delays his return. **Rosa** has gone into labor and dies in childbirth. The baby girl has clung to life warmed by the faithful dog, **Tittla**. **Bjartur** now knows that this is not his child, but decides to raise the girl and names her **Asta Sollilja** ("beloved sun lily"). At an early age **Asta** tests **Bjartur's** conviction by losing her virtue. Angry, **Bjartur** expels her from the home and **Asta**, with her own stubborn sense of independence, refuses to seek her father's grace and compassion. This relationship provides the conflict for the novel as the tending of sheep provides the stillness. The simile of lost sheep is not lost on this reader.

I discovered while researching this book that it was a bestseller in the U.S. in 1946. And yet it was out-of-print in English for over 50 years. The speculation is that **Laxness's** Communist views ran afoul of the **McCarthy** era — not unlike another **Nobel Literature Laureate, Gabriel Garcia Marquez**. Even **Leithauer** connects the two authors, likening **Laxness's Independent People** to **Garcia Marquez's One Hundred Years of Solitude**. I delight in this connection as **Gabriel Garcia Marquez** is one of the "authors of my life," and I share a passion for his work in a way that is not too dissimilar from **Leithauer's** for **Laxness**.



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With **Kindle** books going online for public libraries, how goes it with academic eBooks? This world, as usual, is much more complex, including in its definition of eBooks everything from textbook to interactive educational module or whatever **Pearson** wants to call its wares. Academic publishers, out of habit, expect huge margins in an economic environment of scarcity. Read few readers, higher per-unit costs, and so forth.

The big news on the academic eBook front where the e-thing started is that **ProQuest** bought **ebrary**. Presumably, they bought it

to counter **EBSCO's** purchase of **OCLC's NetLibrary**. A better explanation: library vendor buses come in threes — the first picks up the early adopters, the second, the rest of us, the third, to make sure no one can figure out the real price.

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<http://www.nysd.uscourts.gov/cases/show.php?db=special&id=115>

<http://gmlc.wordpress.com/2011/04/27/a-good-summary-of-kindleoverdrive/>

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