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People Profile: T. Scott Plutchak

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people working for those publishers have no idea where those servers are housed. Who is responsible for insuring their integrity and their long-term preservation?

The organizations on the November guest list of the **Chicago Collaborative** meeting worry about this. The technical solutions developed by **CLOCKSS**, **Portico**, and the **National Library of Medicine** represent very different ways of thinking about how preservation efforts should be funded, managed, and carried out. I came away from the meeting feeling that, although we have tremendous opportunities to preserve more content than ever before, the risks of losing more than history can bear are just as great. The consensus among the participants was that this is a critical time and we have not arrived at clear technical or organizational solutions. The more experimentation, the better.

What does this mean, then, for the role of librarians? Surely, the importance of maintaining a stake in the cultural memory of society remains one of our professional values. But it is also clear that, as with so many things in the digital world, this is not an area that we can effectively deal with on our own. The publishing community has a greater stake and default responsibility than ever before. The rise of institutional repositories provides opportunities for preserving kinds of content that, if preserved at all in the past, tended to be relatively inaccessible.

In *The Book in the Renaissance*, **Andrew Pettegree** points out that our view of the early days of printing is skewed by our focus on what got preserved in libraries, and that tended to be materials that were expensive and relatively little used.⁸ Publishers didn't make money printing those big beautiful bibles — they made money printing indulgences, broadsides, playing cards, inexpensive teaching materials, and, of course, pornography. Little of this kind of material is still extant. **Nicholson Baker** may blame the politics behind the de-acidification and microfilming projects, but the real culprit is, and has always been, the devil of selection. We have never been able to preserve everything, and the choices that we make of what to preserve and how well to preserve determine the lens through which we view history.

There's the opportunity — with digital storage being cheap, can we preserve everything? **Baker's** inclusionist predilections could be served. Practically speaking, though, we are not. We are still at the very beginnings of sorting out the what and the who and the how. On my optimistic days, I believe that we will figure this out and that we'll develop robust and successful preservation programs that rely on the collaborative efforts of librarians, publishers, scholars, and a variety of institutions, some still to be invented. But, because we haven't yet figured out how to effectively deal with preservation in the digital age, a significant portion of the kinds of documentation that historians rely on has already been lost, and the historians of the 22nd century will have a difficult time getting a clear picture of the beginnings of the 21st.

against the grain people profile

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T. Scott Plutchak

BORN AND LIVED: Born in Kaukauna, WI, lived in a couple of other places in Wisconsin, then Washington, DC, then St. Louis before coming to Birmingham.

EARLY LIFE: Played guitar in coffeehouses in high school & college, got a BA in philosophy which perfectly prepared me to spend a couple of years driving a forklift in a candle factory.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: MA in library science from **UW-Oshkosh**, post-grad fellowship at the **National Library of Medicine**, associate director and then director of the **St. Louis University Health Sciences Library**, director at **Lister Hill** since 1995. Editor of the *Journal of the Medical Library Association* from 1999-2005. Various other offices with the **Medical Library Association** including Board of Directors 2006-2009. Variety of other association activities. Service on a number of library advisory boards. Over the past ten years increasingly involved in issues surrounding scholarly publishing and the publisher/librarian nexus.

FAMILY: Wife **Lynn**, step-daughter **Marian**, and 6-year old granddaughter **Josie** who teaches me things on a daily basis.

IN MY SPARE TIME: Reading, listening to music, making music.

FAVORITE BOOKS: *Ulysses*, *Kavalier & Clay*, *Through the Children's Gate*, anything by **Jim Harrison**, anything by **Seamus Heaney** — I could go on.

PET PEEVES: Whiners and people who make ideological pronouncements in the absence of facts.

PHILOSOPHY: "Skepticism is the chastity of the intellect" — **Santayana**

MOST MEMORABLE CAREER ACHIEVEMENT: Serving on the Scholarly Publishing Roundtable, whose recommendations (delivered to Congress and the White House in early 2010) have been incorporated into the **America COMPETES Act** and will hopefully play a role in establishing balanced and effective public access policies to peer-reviewed literature funded by U.S. government agencies.

GOAL I HOPE TO ACHIEVE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW: I have never had five-year goals.

HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: For academic libraries, the building will be a place for students to gather and collaborate, but the work of librarians will happen mostly outside of the building. Librarians will be very involved in data curation activities. An increasing proportion of scholarly material will be open access but the subscription model will still be dominant. Data- and text-mining tools will play a much more important role. Most academic publishing will be electronic, although print will continue to play an important niche role. We will still be struggling with copyright, licensing, access models, and funding. 🐷



I hope my bartender maintains his enthusiasm and begins to write letters to his son. I hope that one day the letters end up in a library or archive. If he uses good paper and a decent fountain pen, the letters will be in fine shape. They won't tell the full story of his relationship with his son, of course. We'd need the text messages for that as well, and those will probably be gone.

It's become a truism that nothing ever really disappears from the Internet. So we're supposed to be careful with our angry emails and our less than discrete **Facebook** postings and tweets. But will they really last? Will they be findable and useful? Who's to say? 🐷

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