

September 2011

@Brunning: People & Technology: At the Only Edge that Means Anything / How We Understand What We Do

Dennis Brunning

Arizona State University, dennis.brunning@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg>



Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Brunning, Dennis (2011) "@Brunning: People & Technology: At the Only Edge that Means Anything / How We Understand What We Do," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 23: Iss. 4, Article 34.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.5959>

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.



Order from the online library specialists

Find more titles, get better service, build stronger collections

Find it »

More than hard-to-find and out-of-print

Inventory of 140 million books

New and used items

Out-of-stock items from publisher or elsewhere

Get it »

Put our library team to work to help you

Payment options, including purchase orders

Consolidated, free, and discounted shipping

Talk to a real person

Build it »

Individual titles or match hundreds on your want list

Replacement projects

Retrospective collection development

Use online tools or have Alibris order for you

SPECIAL OFFER

RECEIVE \$15 OFF YOUR NEXT ORDER OF \$100 OR MORE!

USE COUPON CODE **ATGSEPT** AT CHECKOUT

EXPIRES OCTOBER 31ST, 2011

VISIT: www.alibris.com/library

CALL: 1-877-ALIBRIS

EMAIL: libraries@alibris.com

@Brunning: People & Technology

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>

Memoria “Borders”

In Arizona we can’t close the border, but our **Borders** are closing — as they are closing, for good, all around the United States. There was even an Arizona-based 11th hour to buy the debt of this once ubiquitous bookstore and save 11,000 employees and 400 stores. How many loyal customers were left in the lurch?

What led to the demise? Too many stores, the economy, e-publishing, no paying customers. Surprising, since at just about any time until the doors closed, **Borders** had as many customers as any **Macy’s**, **Dillard’s**, or even **Nordstrom’s** grazing amid the shelves. Problem was — no one was buying anything.

Hmm, **Borders** always seemed busy; were customers just loitering?

Apparently. Until the doors closed, **Borders** was a clean, well-lit place to be for high schoolers, college kids, and parents — with everyone else who enjoyed the atmosphere of coffeehouse, New School of Social Research, and books to read but not buy. A clean, well-lit place with content more relevant than the local public library or the rarefied and abstract academic library.

You’ve got to ask — where will these people assemble now? Will they move over to **Barnes and Noble** or just hang out in Farmville?

Our academic library now has and will have even more amenities akin to **Borders** to attract and keep students within its lit space. You can order pizzas, drink lattes, talk on your Smartphone, ask questions, use Wi-Fi.

On a state budget, though, we are not clean or well-lit. The outsourced janitors do only so much and only so often. The cheap carpet is worn by traffic and spilled espresso. Furniture, unless bolted down, is rearranged to conform to improvised learning communities. We have all this because students don’t need the library anymore — the library as place. They claim and we listen that they don’t even need what we offer. We try to “bring ‘em back.”

Will it work? It didn’t for **Borders** because book publishing changed quickly, and it took more than ill-defined customer service to get books out the door and money in the pocket. Fortunately, we do not have such demanding goals, but we may have a problem of even grander scale — no money, no books, no staff, worn carpets, no budget to replace those lightbulbs. The fate of **Borders** should give pause to those of us who’ve retrofitted the library as a customer-centered place whose users don’t plunk down cash direct as a way of saying — “We want what you have, its value is our value.”

Oh, to those of you who like bookstores, here are some helpful shopping links:

Your Links:

<http://www.bookstoreguide.org/>

<http://lit.newcity.com/indie-bookstore-guide/>

<http://nigelbeale.com/>

Mobile Me: My iPhone

A third of us in the mobile era for libraries will use **iPhones**. They will be expensive, change every year, and there will be a constant tug from others — librarians and users — to pay attention to their choice of smartphones. We will be a nation divided between **iPhone** and **Android** users. This can only divert our attention, cost, and endanger the mojo.

Consistent with the user demographic, a third of librarians will use **iPhones**. We love our **iPhones**. We will love our **iPhones**. When will the love affair end? Believe it, the honeymoon has only begun. Cognitive dissonance theory dictates you will love what you’ve laid so much cash down on. You’ve become an **iSheep**, herded by **Apple’s** exquisite design and **Steven Job’s** mesmerizing marketing, to join the select set, in your walled garden of webly delights.

continued on page 68

There is an app for everything, or so promised a television ad that aired everywhere and all the time last Christmas. With the debut of **Apple's iPad**, the revolutionary tablet computer, those ads fell away to the "apps plus" attitude of the **iPad**. So now you've got an **iPhone**. You're broke, but you have the key that unlocks doors — even car doors; yes, there is an app for that.

You should be all smiley smiles. The **iPhone** does everything that clunky **Blackberry** did, and the Web access — well, there is no comparison. The retinal display technology, which brings **Apple** computer display acuity to a small screen, makes one feel that what you have here is a good laptop on a tiny screen.

Of course, this is the Web doctored by apps. Apps have always been with us. They were the shortcuts, the macros — any programming that removed us from the engineering details and into "just doing."

Apps are antibrowser. And following **Steven Jobs**, they are anti-**Flash** — that amazing moving images software pioneered and disseminated by **Adobe**. **Flash** is the lingua franca of the regular Web but plays as little as possible role in **Steven Job's** apple orchard. For the moment, if you are an **iPhone** user you may well become an **iPad** user; because now you are part of the **Apple** family.

But you will no longer have a **Kindle**, **Google Book**, or **Nook Bookstore** link in your **iPhone** apps. **Apple** wants 30% from all sales linked from its **iPhone** and third party links by-pass this tollbooth.

Welcome to the Garden!

Your Links:

<http://tinyurl.com/3rlefx9>

http://www.wired.com/magazine/2010/08/ff_webrip/all/1

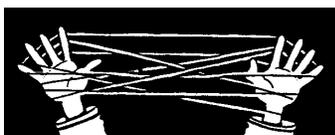
<http://www.theatlanticwire.com/technology/2010/10/the-genius-of-steve-jobs/22661/>

Annals of Search: Google Unfriends Us: Google Friends Canceled

Loyal librarians and loyal searches — we've been "unfriended." On the heels of putting down **Google Labs**, **Google** has closed the email link to **Google Friends**. **Google Friends** began in 1998, while **Sergey Brin**, **Google** co-founder, was still at **Stanford University**. He wanted to regularly update stakeholders. The best method then was an email. It was folksy, informal — an irregular serial. It continued for just over 13 years.

How did **Google Friends** get so unlucky? As explained in the last email sent today, that although **Google Friends** had a good run and served a purpose, since subscriptions had remained flat and had increased in social media like **Twitter** and **Facebook**.

Still, though, we have **Librarian Central** Blog and the *Librarian's Newsletter*. But take a look at the activity there. **Librarian Central** took another summer break (the endless summer post) in 2008 and never returned. Last posts at the Blog were in 2009, and



the last newsletter arrived by Gmail in 2008. Doesn't bode well for these small products; it seems a bit "flat."

What to make of this? Granted, an email newsletter seems so pre-social media. Friendship is, after all, mostly about whom and not what, right?

Despite everywhere, **Google** is nowhere when it comes to "knowing **Google**." They are a private public company, guaranteed to announce or pronounce on their various blog sites or simply act in stealth. Increasingly, they just let their lawyers do the talking, and those forums aren't for us.

Hey, wait a minute, we thought it was impossible to unfriend someone without many hoops. Oh, that's **Facebook**. **Facebook** will never unfriend you, it's in their DNA. **Google**, on the other hand, cuts, caps, and moves on.

Your Links:

http://www.google.com/librariancenter/librarian_newsletter.html

<http://librariancentral.blogspot.com/>

Downloads from the Zeitgeist

Internet 2: still around, still around; we just don't refer to it much. It's moving along, at consortia pace, meeting, conferencing, spending... and rolling out big bandwidth over which intensive data will be crunched and munched into a fine new age of science. Now if we could just keep **Google** and others out and have it all to our scholarly selves.

Peter Coyote: the voice of **Apple's** current "how forever changed" television ad campaign. The gifted and popular actor, who strikingly looks and sounds like **Leonard Nimoy**, sonorously vocalizes a perfect moment, as smooth and simple as any **Apple** product. The moment? The day the codex died. What hath **Steven Job** wrought?

iPhone 5: the one coming, soon, which everyone will want. Remember **George Carlin's** age routine? You're proud to be four, you even count four-and-a-half. By sixty you just want to forget about it. When will **Apple** lose count?

Innovation: at **Google**, read buy, incorporate, and make money, especially those who sell young. Not a jobs program in the least...

Big Deal: from **Trump** through Italian cinema, a phrase that evokes triumph, grandeur, serious street cred. In Library Land — not so much. The librarian's debt ceiling.

Google a Day: borrowing from prayer or thought or saying for the day, **Google** announces a little ready-reference service which delivers a **Google** byte of information every day. Who needs a **Dilbert** calendar now?

Lulu: at *lulu.com*, the leading self-publishing company, lulu means... watch, though, your **Kindle**, **Nook**, **iBook** purchasing, police your approval plans, lulu publications come in all formats, written by the guy-next-door (maybe).

Take back: ever more popular idea, an actionable goal of old media to get some sugar for all the cane — arrests, court decisions, enforceable in China — well, that's a whole different IP thing. Ranchers and rustlers?

2 cents: what investment analysts figure is

Amazon's profit on each item across its millions of offerings. Everything is growth and volume, quick and efficient delivery, inventory and inventory management sort of "in

the cloud." Sustainable? Well, you know you aren't going to buy a bespoke suit or Porsche, yet, on **Amazon**. But books, yeah. eBooks, oh, heck yeah!

Free market bully: what **Apple** or any other online company can be accused of, in spades, when they limit choice. **Apple** calls the shots.

Vote for Buddy Ryan: what you'll want to do after watching this segment from the *Colbert Report*.

Kindle Store link in iPhone Kindle app: what you won't have from now on.

Exposure: mot du choix among the Webinistas — discover servicers trotted all around the block by young librarian Webinistas as if seeing something is finding something. Waiting for **Roy Tenant's** new version of librarians want to search, users want to find.

Google Cheerleaders: term not exactly coined by information industry consultant and writer **Stephen E. Arnold** — he writes about "Google cheerleading books" — but as there must be some actor behind the gerund, he must mean writers like **John Battelle**, **Ken Auletta**, and **Jarvis**, who've been given the golden ticket to explore **Google's** version of **Willy Wonka's** chocolate works. **Stephan** is neither cheerleader nor critique; he is a consultant. He writes with precision and depth about **Google** for the library information industry, so it is smart to catch glimpses of his high-priced research studies in the free versions of *Information Today*. Catch his take on changes at the top and **Google +** in a recent free read.

Network effects: concepts used to explain everything from how **Facebook** launches revolutions like the Arab spring and the short-lived green revolution in Iran to why we like kittens in mittens. A Website, possibly in response to Washington gridlock and bipartisanship politics, will let you vote on who can run for President. Social media, social revolution.

Aux armes les citoyens: becomes "follow us" on **Twitter**; cast your vote becomes "friend me" on **Facebook**. Network effects where the long march goes online...

Grandpa Box: **Dilbert** characterizes the desktop in generational terms; the laptop, "I'll text the 90s." Did your library just spend recession dollars on work areas for students with laptops? Your thinking may need bloomers.

Your Links:

<http://www.internet2.edu/>

<http://adwhois.com/forum/showthread.php?777-Apple-iPad-2-Commercial>

http://www.amazon.com/gp/feature.html/ref=kcp_iphone_mkt_lnd?docId=1000301301

Fix-it steps for Kindle iPhone app users...

<http://newsbreaks.infotoday.com/News-Breaks/The-End-of-an-Era-for-Google-LabsInnovation-Now-Via-Acquisition-and-Pontification-76812.asp>

Google Cheerleaders

www.dilbert.com

See cartoon panel of August 3, 2011

<http://www.eweek.com/c/a/Mobile-and-Wireless/Apples-iPhone-5-Android-Look-to-Dominate-2012-Smartphone-Market-506016/>

