November 2011

Pelikan's Antidisambiguation -- "Content Producer Goals vs. Public Perception"

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Recommended Citation

Pelikan, Michael P. (2011) "Pelikan's Antidisambiguation -- "Content Producer Goals vs. Public Perception"," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 23: Iss. 5, Article 41.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.6015>

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And another preconference director is the indefatigable **Rick Burke** of **SCELC** (the **Statewide California Electronic Library Consortium**). SCELC was established in 1986 to develop resource-sharing relationships among the libraries of private academic institutions in California. And SCELC recently moved to other headquarters and had a big reception this past weekend (October 14 or so). In fact, above is a picture of a **SCELC** martini compliments of **Becky Lenzini**! We have more pictures which will be on the **ATG NewsChannel Website** that aren't in this print issue! Much fun was had by all! <http://scllc.org/>
www.against-the-grain.com/

Well, some layabeds will NOT be coming to the **Charleston Conference**! I don't like their excuses, but, hey, people have a right to their actions, so they tell me. Heard, for example, from the urbane and very British **John Cox** who says he has been considering retirement for some time. (Actually, I remember, was it ten years ago?, that he did announce retirement, but he didn't retire!) Anyway, **John** says that he will be 65 in October and his company will cease to trade. Here is a direct quote from **John** himself: "I have been in publishing since 1969. During my 42 years in the industry, I have seen profound changes. First of all, technology transformed the way the publishing process operated; I was responsible for automating page make-up and typesetting in the mid-1980s. Then the Internet changed the delivery of information forever — first in scholarly journals, then eBooks, and now in general publishing. It has been a challenging and fascinating time." **John** says that he will continue to be active. He has a couple of non-executive directorships, and

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Pelikan's Antidisambiguation — "Content Producer Goals vs. Public Perception"

Column Editor: **Michael P. Pelikan** (Penn State) <mpp10@psu.edu>

What's a computer? Or rather, what's a computer for?

It's an interesting question because its outcome tends to define a subclass: not just of users, but ultimately, of devices and of market segmentation.

Early uses to which computers were put, such as artillery ballistics calculations or code breaking, bespoke a very serious purpose for such devices. Prototypical attempts to model and predict weather, economic trends, or election outcomes underscored the "largeness of purpose" reasonably associated by the lay public with the idea of a computer. The image was the antithesis of something that might be used for personal or even frivolous purposes.

As this column goes to print, the death of **Michael S. Hart** on September 6, 2011 provides occasion to note just how radical what he did in 1971 really was. His account on the **University of Illinois** mainframe was created on July 4, 1971, and, ruminating on that fact, he opened a file on the system and typed in a copy of the Declaration of Independence. Rather than distribute it by email, he chose to make the copy available by download for

those who might wish to have a copy of the document. This, of course, was the genesis of Project Gutenberg and marked, for all intents and purposes, the birth of the eBook.

Once small computers crawled out of the ocean of government-sponsored research and development and onto the dry land of the desktop, a few patterns of usage emerged fairly quickly. There were hobbyists who employed the machines to do what computers had long done — these were to computers what ham radio operators were (indeed, still are) to the radio industry. There were those who found "legitimate business uses" for the small computer — these were those who built spreadsheets modeling their small business or who employed word processors as what one early adopter I knew called "a glorified typewriter." And of course, there were the games.

It has often been the case that in game programming one may find the most focused, creative, and industrious use of computer capabilities, simply because there has been such incentive to reach and exceed the inherent capabilities of the available computing power (ironically, some of the most powerful math processors

available today are found in the graphics cards in game-oriented personal computers; these have been integrated by enterprising hardware hackers into bench-built machines of genuinely awesome processing power).

One could make a strong case that once potential buyers were convinced that a particular category of use was practical or even just available on computers, it was demand for those uses that drove computer adoption and sales. "Software sells hardware," was the refrain of the 1980s and, if one look closely enough, remains true today.

You can't sell folks something they don't want, at least, not for long. Certainly it takes some base number of adopters to take you, the hardware maker, up on your offer for your product to fly. If that same number simply ignores your product, you're sunk. Conversely, if you're a hardware maker of enormous influence, you can probably introduce almost anything and get at least a few of the True Believers to testify that the latest thing changed their lives. You might even get trade writers to credit

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Rumors

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he is still involved in civil aviation and consumer representation. **John** said his email to me bounced back — was this a sign to him? I am sincerely hoping that he will write now and then for *Against the Grain*. His regular column **As I See It** has been a great contribution to our conversations for many years! Good luck, **John**, but we hope this is not goodbye!

Also heard from **Stephen Pugh** who will not be in Charleston this year. **Stephen** has conducted a survey of librarians for the **LIANZA (Library and Information Association of New Zealand)** conference in Wellington beginning October 30. The survey is about **Value for Money** projects in which libraries are participating and **Stephen** says he was impressed by the percentage of libraries that are already engaged in these kinds of projects. A summary of the results is now at **Oranjarra Value for Money/ROI Survey Results** (https://www.surveymonkey.com/sr.aspx?sm=24hf3JsARCtHChMDDkpbPu8I1a6xhC5zmad2hvH0Z6Y_3d). The full results will be posted at The **Oranjarra** Website shortly.

<http://oranjarra.com/>

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your product with “legitimizing” the product category, if not inventing it outright.

Take **Apple's iPad**. **Apple** didn't invent the tablet computer — everybody knows that **Gene Roddenberry** did, and that **James T. Kirk** was one of its early adopters. **Chief Science Officer Spock** could explain how an early adopter of a product category in the 23rd century could influence product development in the 20th. **Spock**, of course, was one of the first to use a USB Drive. Those early 23rd-century models were kind of big and boxy, but they were hot-pluggable, non-volatile memory — every kid knew that! And don't forget how the flip-form communicator warped into our time and space, once **Motorola** worked out how to build one.

Seriously, these things have taken off not because some company jammed them down our throats (with the possible exception of the **iPad**), but because people decided they wanted them, had to have them, and were willing to part with the coin to get their hands on them.

But let's get back to eBooks for a moment. Right about the time we were hearing of **Michael Hart's** death, speculation was heating up about the details of **Sony's** and **Amazon's** coming **Android** tablets.

Sony's machines are going to be drop-dead gorgeous pieces of hardware, and are coming from a gigantic company that has been in mass media for years, selling not just consumer electronics, but also occupying a key throne in the motion picture industry and owning one of the

world's last remaining Large Record Labels. **Sony's** advance blurbs prominently state that their tablets will run the latest version of **Android** — meaning Honeycomb for certain, and holding out a tacit promise of a timely upgrade to Ice Cream Sandwich when available. (Sorry — if Honeycomb and Ice Cream Sandwich don't resonate: **Android** OS versions have been using food names — Gingerbread, Honeycomb, Ice Cream Sandwich...)

Amazon's widely expected decision to build their new machine around the open-source core of an earlier version of **Android** that is running on most other **Android** tablets marks a potential fork in the evolutionary path of the **Android** operating system, and given the sheer mass of **Amazon** and the size of the shadow they cast, this is no small development.

People have been confusing software for hardware for years. Executives wishing to sound “with it” used to walk into early computer stores and tell the bemused pony-tailed salesman, “Say, I'd like to buy one of those Visicalcs.” Visicalc, you see, was the first commercially significant spreadsheet programs. It ran on an **Apple II**. The suit had seen someone in the Finance Department running Visicalc on an **Apple II** and asked, “Say, what is that,” and having received the answer “Visicalc” thought they ought to have a Visicalc on their desk, too.

One may expect that **Amazon's** plans for their **Android**-based tablet will give us something somewhere between the **Kindle** and the **iPad**. It will ultimately, if not immediately, have a beautiful color screen. The stock **Android** store will be replaced with

Amazon's Android app store. There will also be **Amazon's** Music Store, Cloud Drive, Prime Instant Videos — oh, and eBooks, for those in the audience who haven't forgotten how to read. Actually, that's hyperbole, and I admit it. The **Kindle** is a huge seller precisely because millions of folks still love to read.

But there are several interesting things going on here. First, unlike **Apple** or **Sony**, **Amazon** is primarily a retailer, not a hardware manufacturer, nor a software house. “They're a content retailer!” You can practically hear the scoffing — except that no one's scoffing. For **Amazon** is a Very Big content retailer. And we all have to watch and see what happens.

What's more, they've signaled a move toward a subscription-based model for content distribution, like **Netflix** (by which I mean both **Netflix** and **Qwikster**) but for eBooks. But again, folks' reactions to this news so far seem very quiet. We have to watch and see what happens.

The “what happens” part of this relates to the adoption or non-adoption — no, that's too dry: the seizing or non-seizing of these offerings by the people with the money. That's us. Well, in some the case of some *Against the Grain* readers, that's our customers, er, your customers. In other cases, the people with the money are the kids with the backpacks, getting younger every year (the kids, not the backpacks). They're the one whom we believe we've chosen to enhance service to by opening coffee shops in our campus libraries. They're the ones who vote with their feet.

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BORN AND LIVED: Born in Buffalo, NY; have lived in Greensboro, NC (through early grade) and Nashville, TN (high school and college years).

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: English teacher in middle grades, Nashville for 2 years; English instructor, **Radford College** (before it became co-ed and a university); **John Logan Community College**, Carterville IL; and then to Bowling Green for English and eventually library staff and faculty employment. Began at **WKU** as English instructor and then found part-time temp work in the library system. Joined faculty in 1978 and quickly pursued MLS at **Peabody/Vanderbilt**.

FAMILY: Husband **Tom**, retired graphics designer **WKU**; one recently married (on Tybee Island) son **Michael** who took his own career path and is a detective with the Spring Hill, TN police department; one 15-year-old cat, Maggie (Maine Coon hybrid without the hugeness factor).

IN MY SPARE TIME: Just love bicycling whenever I can. (Rode across Iowa twice — RAGBRAI).

FAVORITE BOOKS: *Prodigal Summer* by **Barbara Kingsolver**, and somehow I was absorbed by **Stieg Larsson's** *Girl Who.... Series* (although I'd never want to see movies of the three).

PET PEEVES: People who end sentences with "Where at."

PHILOSOPHY: In work be firm, fair, friendly; with family and friends realize that life is short and don't delay experiences, travel, and visits. And, when in doubt, Shop.

MOST MEMORABLE CAREER ACHIEVEMENT: Besides being named Interim Dean, my other most memorable was being elected president of **NASIG** for the 2001 term.

GOAL I HOPE TO ACHIEVE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW: Not be Interim Dean; return as a department head in the library.

HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: From what I am reading now, the library will increasingly use mobile applications to reach students. I think also the current search and discovery systems will continue to undergo transformations that will be more user-friendly; and small presses and societies that have not yet moved to the online environment with IP and proxy access must do so; publishers must provide more back files with current subscriptions. **JSTOR** and **Project MUSE** will continue to be major platforms for current and archival quality content. 🌱

E-Everything ...
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Endnotes

1. PechaKucha Night: This presentation style was developed in Tokyo in 2003 and has evolved into PechaKucha Night events which consist of approximately a dozen presentations; each presenter has 20 slides that are shown for 20 seconds. Thus, each presenter has 6 minutes and 40 seconds to explain their ideas. — Wikipedia

It's the feet that are so troubling. No, seriously. They represent the fact that business models and service approaches we've grown comfortable with are continuing to undergo assaults of increasing intensity. We can't simply discount any given scenario as too implausible or unexpected to take seriously.

Back when **Capt. Kirk** was first signing off on the Captain's Log on his tablet computer (over forty years ago), who'd have thought

that tape cassettes would surpass the reel to reel, or even the vinyl, along with their accompanying business and distribution models? Who'd have taken seriously, back when **Capt. Kirk** was flipping open his communicator, that the digital cell phones his grandchildren would see with that form factor would be the cheap ones (or are they his great, great, great grandparents)?

Next thing you'll be telling me is that it's time to take 3-D seriously.

By definition, it's the things that haven't caught our attention that take us by surprise... 🌱