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Booklover -- Percussion

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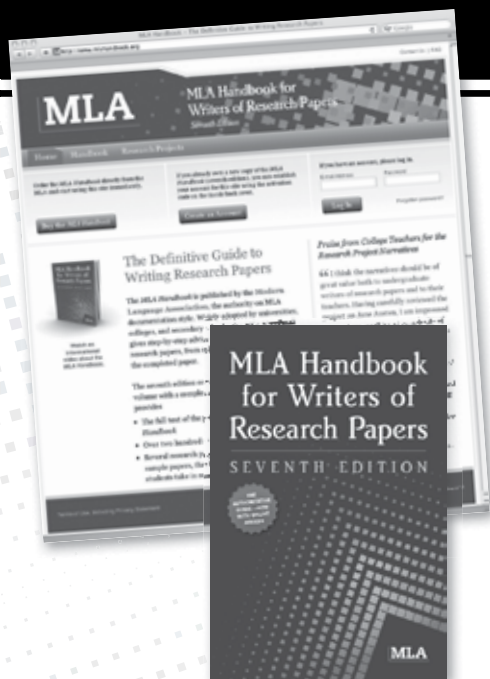
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Booklover — Percussion

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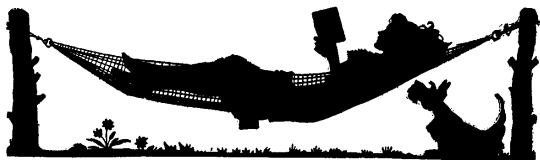
Günter Grass won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1999 with his first novel *The Tin Drum*, cited as one of his most notable works. I added *The Tin Drum* to my **Kindle** reading list quite awhile ago and then life got in my way of delving into this book. Recently, I was inspired to begin reading by a photograph hanging in the **James W. Colbert** Education Center and Library building at the **Medical University of South Carolina**. Photographs are often on display along the second floor of this building. This particular exhibit is by **Gerald Bybee**. He spent time photographing the people of Okaruse, a village in West Akyem Municipal in the eastern region of Ghana, West Africa. These photographs are captivating. The vivid colors of the village are displayed using archival pigments on canvas giving them a larger than life effect. The particular photograph that has caught my attention is of a young boy resting on a tribal drum. The caption to the

photograph identifies the boy as **Kweku**. At six years of age he is the youngest drummer in the Nkabom Children's Cultural Troupe in Okaruse. He is also the sight guide for his eight-year-old brother **Francis**. **Francis** has a degenerative eye disease that will ultimately leave him blind. The photograph hanging next to **Kweku's** is of **Francis** sitting on a Gome drum. The power in these two photographs is beating. Everyday I pass this exhibit while walking between the labs where I work, and I listen to what **Kweku** is saying with his eyes as he rests his head on that drum.

Follow, as the rhythm of this photograph takes me to **Oskar Matzerath**, the lead character of **Grass's** *The Tin Drum*. **Oskar** is in a mental institution, and he has convinced his keeper, **Bruno Münsterberg**, to provide him with paper for his recollections. As **Oskar** lays down his words, the story begins to beat from the page with a magical realism that reminds me of **García Márquez**, and the reader is led on a journey accented with the beat of **Oskar's** tin drum. "You can start a story in the middle, then strike out boldly backward and forward to create confusion." My foot is tapping to the beat of the book and I read on.

"Today Oskar says simply: The moth drummed. I've heard rabbits, foxes, and dormice drum. They say wood peckers drum worms from their casings. And men beat on timpani, cymbals, kettles, and drums. We have eardrums, brake drums, we drum up excuses, drum into our heads, drum out of the corps. Drummer boys do that, to the beat of a drum. Composers pen concerti for strings and percussions. I might mention Tattoos, both minor and major; and Oskar's attempts up to now: all that is nothing compared with the orgy of drumming staged by that moth with two simple sixty-watt bulbs on the day of my birth. Perhaps there are Negroes in darkest Africa, and those in America who have not yet forgotten Africa, who with their innate sense of rhythm might manage, in imitation of my moth, or of African moths — which as everyone knows are larger and more splendid than those of Eastern Europe — to drum in a similar fashion: with discipline, yet freed of all restraint; I hold to my East European standards, cling to that medium-sized powdery-brown moth of the hour of my birth, declare him Oskar's master.

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especially the SOPA opera. When **Obama** is spotted with official White House **iPhone**, watch out publishers, your copyright law is on the ropes.

Gluejar: What many of us forgot to buy when school supplies were required, a staple product for any scrapbooker, and now a library industry concept. **Eric Hellman**, for several decades a successful library industry programmer-entrepreneur (**OpenCate**, **OCLC's** New Jersey Office — New Jersey!), has conjured an online company that seeks donations to unglue orphan works from their legal bindings. It's a cool, although ultimately conservative, idea that pays tribute to access and copyright in one seamless stroke. Only problem: what if the **Lessigs** of the world want to re-glue a book a different way, like, a **Picasso** print?

CengageBrain.com: we're uploading hoping it will return back, downloaded into meaning. Not a diss — **Cengage** kept alive great library companies like **Gale**, **Information Access Corporation**, kept alive despite **Thomson** "suits" best efforts to extract all value. But what's this brain all about? Can't get the image of **Mel Brook's** Frankenstein out of our collective brain — **Raymond's** Dad, **Frank Barone** (**Peter Boyle**) crooning as only a brainless monster could in "Young Frankenstein..."

ReachMD: satellite channel "167" on Sirius/XM radio, rotates short and long information bits for health care professionals. So much free CME it's hard to fathom the business model. Except for a few health care promotions — a **Sony** Ultrasound workstation for office-bound physicians — that's it. But they do get the ad played ad nauseum. If you like medicine you just have to listen a bit to feel dialed into the profession that touches us — all and everywhere.

ReachMLS: Let's not short the opportunity to find a way for a **ReachMD** for us. **Howard Stern** would never let us near Sirius XM, but the average library IT shop probably has the tools and means to put up an Internet radio channel offering scaled-down versions of what those MDs listen to. Tip: pitch **Gregory Penske**, son of billionaire motorsports, car dealerships, and rental transport **Roger Penske** (the General) who loves books, or drop by **EBSCO** or **Elsevier**. You could fold in those informative soft-voiced pitches used on **ReachMD** with voices that smoothly pitch your **Scopus**, **Mendelay**, or discovery services. We're librarians, we sit at desktops all day long, we need a subliminal moment now and then... Hey, I want an ultrasound in my office....

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Alt-Reading: Where Patron-Driven Acquisition May Fear to Tread...

History of Communications: Media and Society from the Evolution of Speech to the Internet by **Marshall Poe** — The author, by day a professor of Slavic history, views major communication paradigms in modern times to conclude that technology is pulled by users into the forms it takes rather than the other way. Doesn't bode well for the academic library as presently configured, but read it for a good understanding where we are going and what "pulling" we can do.

Digital Barbarism: a Writer's Manifesto by **Mark Helprin** — novelist **Helprin's** book-length reply to blog detractors who excoriated him on a *New York Times* op-ed piece about, well, copyright. As an author whose only income stemmed from royalties, **Helprin** took issue with the **Lesig**-led movement that views copyright as out-of-sync and style with digital culture. Must-read for those who don't want to read the dozens of books penned since 2007 on both sides of this unsolved problem.

When I Was a Child I Read Books: Essays by **Marilynne Robinson** — another book lover pounds us with the beauty and being of books — helps refocus on how writing and reading take priority over how we get books. In hand trumps at hand...

The Nine: Inside the Secret World of the Supreme Court by **Jeffrey Toobin** — the *New York Times* senior writer who follows the court, tells all about the justices who will decide health care and copyright — because it will come down to that. Too bad **Toobin** did not ask them about their preferences for e-readers.

The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to our Brains by **Nicholas Carr**

— **Carr's** theme is that we are losing our memory to the Internet and that we are knowledgeable about much too little; when we need depth we just get Facebook.

Art of Memory by **Frances Yates** — older book about mnemonic techniques practiced by premoderns who had to memorize speeches and sermons. Now available in eBook where you can just electronic bookmark how far you've read.

Googlization of Everything by **Siva Vaidhyanathan** — you will need the art of memory to remember the author's name, but when you do, you will cover the width, breadth, and depth of how Google has impacted our consumer, intellectual, and spiritual lives. Writes a great deal about libraries and their problem in these e-times.

Tiger, Head, Snake, Tails: China Today: How It Got There and Where it is Heading by **Jonathan Fenby** — for the nonsinologist, a veteran journalist and China watcher summarizes, analyses, and forecasts what's up with the Fifth Generation of China's leadership. Instrumental for librarians wondering who are these new librarians at our gates (or at **ALA Exhibits**).

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...But who sent the moth, and allowed him and a late-summer thunderstorm, banging and blustering like a high school principal, to stimulate my longing for the tin drum my mother had promised me, and to steadily increase over time both my aptitude and my desire for it?"

Oskar's story unfolds with **Grass** pulsating between first- and third-person like a drummer whose drumsticks strike first the snare and then the cymbal. And even though the story can be at times graphic and somewhat journalistic in its view, the words dance on the page to the rhythm that **Grass** has created and I am captivated.

In the Introduction provided on my **Kindle**, **Grass** entices you with three stories: how the book came to exist in 1959 and how the book came to America in 1962 and

how new versions of book were collectively translated in 2005. This last story is quite fascinating. Ten translators met in Gdańsk early in the summer of 2005 with the goal to create new translations. *The Tin Drum* contains numerous graphic and quite realistic scenes which can be assaulting. **Grass** had worried that the previous versions may have been shortened or softened by the translators to make the novel acceptable to their readers. He prepared himself for this adventure by rereading his novel for the first time since writing it, an experience that both delighted and surprised him. The translators and the author worked for eight days, even taking time to visit sites described in the narrative. I am glad that I am reading this updated version.

Like **Oskar**, I feel that **Kweku** finds solace in his drum. The troubles of the world are daunting for these two boys, fictitious and real, and they create a beat so we pay attention. 🌳