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

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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>

On the Road

Got the moving fever? Want to change your life altogether, move your life forward?

Here's betting that when you look around your office suite, peer above the cubicle, or come in from the high-density storage assignment they've given you, you'll see your immediate problem. There isn't much mobility in the profession. Let's face it, mortgage melt-downs, state budget freezes, disappearing endowments have led to frozen and lost salary lines. Our times have created more than a little hardening of the job arteries.

A good observation, as good as any in an open access econ journal, is that administrative budgets come back first before any good times for the line librarians. A good barometer is always the travel budget. There's an old saying in the trenches that a library manager will go to any opening, even an envelope. Just take a look at the events calendar in library land; it's hot.

Now if you are flying now to yet another conference or meeting or board or review panel — don't get steamed. It's one of the perks of higher education everywhere to travel a la mode to whatever envelope is opening in the world that has something to do with our profession in decline. We all know this. But the math is easy to figure out that administrative travel on the library side and conference travel on the academic side are gargantuan. It's a small endowment in the aggregate.

Our administrators love to travel to library-related destinations. How essential this is may be anyone's guess. It's certainly a professional upgrade and perk.

Since there is no new money to go around, it may be time to audit our administrative travel. Our vendors have taken to online demonstrations and training through the Webinar. To cut costs. Why not try this and give line librarians more than the annual trek to ALA? How much networking do you have to do, oh leadership?

We don't vault our vendor partners for the limited mobile options. Who among us would really know how to handle users who are coming to us through the instant and everywhere access medium that is mobile? We'd be assessing the research situation from our premium interfaces while the user is getting bare bones access.

For a great view of the challenges forthcoming, download to your e-reader or license for your library the new book by **Michael Saylor**, "the Mobile Wave." **Saylor** is talking the tsunami metaphor and not what your Grandma does when you were leaving.

Saylor's observation and his argument is that app phones and mobile tablets represent a new paradigm in business and consumer computing. Operating systems, interfaces, connectivity are distinctively different than the desktop, so much so, that their ownership, use, and adoption have far eclipsed the installed base of the personal computer.

The result: a lightning speed transformation of computing, printing, entertainment, education, medicine, education, and social interaction. And the big problem: mobile computing takes to desktop computing like oil to water. They are different — a difference likely to take business away from the desktop.

So far libraries and, for that matter, much of work and consumer computing has avoided genuinely committing to mobility. There are legal, cost, and even technical challenges to the transition. But how much time do any of us think we have before we want to school, entertain, and fix ourselves using our handheld phones and tablet computers?

Your Book Citation:

Saylor, Michael. *The Mobile Wave: How Mobile Intelligence Will Change Everything.* Vanguard Press, 2012.

Hugs and Kisses XO's & XO's

"Everywhere I go, you're on my phone, and you're in my dream... you're on my screen..." (Black Eye Peas)

We may dispute the meaning but we can't short the significance — mobile computing is the new computing platform. We're going to have go small to play at all.

This is troublesome for library computing. However much we've talked about Library 2.0, it has mainly meant smartphone and tablet optimization for existing desktop operating systems. The library remains steadfastly Wintel in orientation and execution.

We talk the talk, but we don't walk the walk. Ever so slowly our vendors and publishers have trickled out mobile apps which work okay. Yet just like our elaborately arranged shelves, our architecturally efficient buildings (in some cases), and our command of big screen search platforms, these mini-versions do not cut the mustard.

We trust our industry is deeply concerned and committed to mobile strategies. But it's not an easy transition. **OCLC's Worldcat iPhone** app is decent, yet it is available only from their Website and not **iTunes**. Most **iPhone** and **iPad** users think of **iTunes** as the **iPhone** app store and not **OCLC**. Dublin, Ohio is not Cupertino.

EBSCOhost app is also a decent app in the main because it works. However, like **OCLC's Worldcat's** app, you need to download while logged into your library's **EBSCOhost** site and email yourself a special security key to operate. You can bet this is off-putting and a drag for any mobile user. It's like shopping at Costco — you've got to have that membership card!

Apple is Officially Cool...

If you are old enough you can remember that **Apple** computers weren't always what you'd call cool. You've drunk the Kool-aid if anything about the **Apple II** or the **Mac** was cool. Bulky off-white plastic, oddly-sized beige plastic boxes at first, then the warm gray platinum or psychedelic acrylics of the **iMacs**. It wasn't necessarily the looks that issued in the **Apple** computer age.

It took **Steve Jobs** several decades to perfect those sleek and thin devices of the iFamily — the **iPod**, **iPhone**, **iTouch**, and **iPad**. **Apple** went tiny to make it big. Remember, **Jobs** wanted all of us to pay \$10,000 for a large black plastic cube called "Next." Apparently marketing genius is about maturity, which we sense isn't cool.

Today, though, **Apple** is dialed into cool, and the meme was finally codified in the UK ruling. In London High Court a judge found for **Samsung** against **Apple's** claim that it borrowed too freely of its look and feel. Not so, ruled the magistrate, the **Samsung Galaxy Tablet** wasn't cool enough to be confused with the **iPad**.

Slam. **Samsung** just got served. No one was going to buy its competing tablet for its look, the magistrate opined.

He probably typed up his ruling from his **Mac Pro** — although who knows what austerity measures the Cameron government requires for computing budgets of British High Courts.

Coda: the same judge, **Colin Birss**, in a subsequent communication, told **Apple** to post on its Website that **Samsung** had not infringed on design features in question. Both sides claim victory...

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Your Links:

FT July 10, 2012 USA edition, front page.

<http://arstechnica.com/apple/2012/07/judge-to-apple-tell-uk-consumers-samsung-didnt-infringe-on-ipad-design/>

<http://tech2.in.com/news/general/apple-samsung-lawsuit-to-go-on-for-another-year-fitch-ratings/330302>

Where the Wild Things Are: Vade Mecum Edition

Just before **Maurice Sendak** passed away a few months ago, he appeared on the **Colbert Report**. It was taped from **Sendak's** home, and **Colbert** chose to softside the author with praise and admiration. **Sendak** was obviously in tune with **Colbert**; his face showed like **Andy Rooney** confronted with **Ali G**, but his answers were thoughtful and warm.

Colbert had an objective; he had just published his own children's book *I Am a Pole (and So Can You)*, so perhaps he wanted to cast perception that he too was a children's author. We can't be sure that **Sendak** saw the woman dancing on a pole in a strip lounge, but **Sendak** strikes as an author who would take the time.

They didn't talk business at all, but they did explore the written word, illustration, and wonderment. They talked reading and imagination.

Gaspee Day: Fireworks*

Moonlight —
opalescence —
zigzagging between tall pilings,
Its pale ribbon
an elongated curvature
oscillating
beneath the sea wall.

Families, & children gather at the foot of Bayside
anticipating a brilliant display.
Northwest winds push clouds offshore:
a magnesium arc rises over high tide,
Rock Island and the breakwater.
Fireworks begin.

Ooh's and aah's reach across
the cove's velvet amplitude;
reverberations echo along docks, power boats, and sail boats.
Yellow, red, green, blue, and white luminosities;
brilliant sparks, drooping fountains, whirling galaxies —
ancient alchemy —
cacophony of motion and emotion —
scintillations of sodium, calcium, strontium, barium, copper
rise at acute angles.

Side-by-side with a Gibbous moon,
fireworks reach a crescendo —
then stillness —
plumes of sulfur and charcoal drift down the bay,
families and villagers spontaneously
begin clapping and singing:
God bless America,
land that I love...

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*Celebrating the burning of the HMS Gaspee on June 9, 1772
off Namquid Point (now Gaspee Point), Narragansett Bay.

Colbert's book is available in eBook versions. None of **Sendak's** are. One wonders what **Sendak** would have made of this had **Colbert** asked.

What comes out in print and what comes out in electronic format — and which format — is all about the crazy wild world of publishing. Publishers are guessing, checking the receipts, and guessing again.

I Am a Pole (and So Can You) looks nice on **Kindle's Fire** and on the **iPad**. The electronic version doesn't short the reader any of the visual impact of the print edition.

Except in one place. Just opposite the title page, the book's owner can fill in personal details of who owns the book and when it was received. This follows a children's publishing tradition of bestowing ownership on the child and presumably a lifelong and significant relationship to the book.

Sadly, at the moment you can't fill in your e-edition. Perhaps there will be an app for that in the future, but somehow it just feels like it just won't be the same. When it feels the same, we'll know we're as old as **Maurice Sendak** and part of a beloved and by-gone era.

Coda: **Rosenbach Museum & Library** in Philadelphia is the repository for over 10,000 of **Sendak's** works. It is also the repository for **Colbert's** book.

Soon book buyers, electronic or otherwise, will be paying sales tax in most states. Now for volume readers this will be felt because that \$9.99 is going up and up on its own, and the free shipping is not going to offset this increase. As a countering move, **Amazon** — the main target of state taxing — has moved warehouses into states. Some states are now collecting millions in heretofore lost revenues. **Amazon**, though short this money, is challenging local retailers — from bookstores to **Wal-Mart** — in same-day delivery of its often deeply-discounted merchandise.

It's hard to pick a winner in these wild times. Perhaps libraries, especially public libraries, could same-day deliver contemporary reading to patrons in a version of the academic's patron-driven acquisition? Why not use **Amazon's** same-day service to deliver your patron a book that you'll use again?

What we have in book publishing these days is rock and roll constant change. How we read, how we buy what we read, how we share what we read, even how we read about reading — all a perpetual motion machine of change.

You've got to admit it's fun to learn one day that **Microsoft** is bank-rolling **Barnes and Noble** to push its e-content via the **Nook** and on another to read about yet another court case in the sorting out of who can do what online with books.

Look to Facebook to innovate here. Finally reaching adulthood with its IPO (interesting they've appointed older business people to sit on the board, perhaps to help its twenty-something wunderkinds to take it to payday), Facebook offers a great platform, especially for online reading communities and book clubs. What stronger affinity is there than shared delight in a book?

Right now readers, both those who read from the cloud and those who use more earthbound means, have a rich array of choices. The only downside to this is how are you going to keep track of all this? Every reader, a book — who would have thought this would again come around as the big question? Librarians, let's get busy!

Your Links:

<http://www.colbertnation.com/the-colbert-report-videos/406796/january-24-2012/grim-colberty-ales-with-maurice-sendak-pt-1>

http://www.slate.com/articles/business/small_business/2012/07/amazon_same_day_delivery_how_the_e_commerce_giant_will_destroy_local_retail.html 🌳