

November 2012

Back Talk-It is Getting Very Crowded Under Publisher Buses These Days

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Recommended Citation

Ferguson, Anthony W. (2012) "Back Talk-It is Getting Very Crowded Under Publisher Buses These Days," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 24: Iss. 5, Article 14.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.6317>

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copies, had ZERO copies available, and 186 people were on the waiting list. For *Fifty Shades Darker*, they had purchased 20 copies, had ZERO available, and 90 people waiting to read this title. For *Fifty Shades Freed* they had purchased 15 copies, ZERO were available, and 87 people were waiting to read a copy. The only other Top 15 title they owned was *Gone Girl* for which the library owned 17 copies, ZERO copies were available and 128 people were on the list to read it.

If the library only had four of the Top 15 titles, why didn't the County library buy the other 11? Not surprisingly, given **Sullivan's** letter, seven are from **Penguin**. This means that one publisher is responsible for denying the eBook readers of Pima County, Arizona's public libraries the right to read what others are reading. Three of the other four titles are published by the **Little, Brown/Hachette** group, and the other title is published by **Hyperion**.

So, what should all of this mean to these anti public library publishers? They should recognize there is nothing to fear. In the face of long cues, many readers will simply buy their own copies if they have a passion to read a particular title or author. In my own case, with my credit card registered and gift card cash balances, it is only too easy to buy an eBook. In most cases for the fiction writers I most enjoy, I have long since read the county library's print and electronic holdings and, using my own funds, have loaded up my Kindle so that I am never in danger of boredom. Please retrieve public libraries from beneath the bus. 🍷

Rumors from page 64

Conference next November! November 6-9, 2013. Hooray! Looking forward!

Speaking of **dynamism**, just heard that the awesome **OCLC Senior Research Scientist Lynn Silipigni Connaway**, Ph.D. has been elected to a three-year term on the Board of Directors of the **American Society for Information Science and Technology**. A frequent speaker in Charleston, **Dr. Connaway** leads the **OCLC Research User Behavior Studies & Synthesis activities theme**. Her responsibilities include research projects that directly involve **OCLC** libraries and users as well as collaborative investigations of digital information seekers, users in the virtual research environment, and digital "visitors" and "residents," and **IMLS-funded grant projects** to study virtual reference and social question and answer services and the behavior patterns of college and university information seekers. The **American Society for Information Science and Technology (ASIS&T)** supports a range of efforts to improve access to information and advance the information sciences and related applications of information technology. Congrats, **Lynn!**

A long-time colleague from the **College of Charleston** is returning to **Charleston** in November for the **Conference** after 20 years! The last time I saw the gorgeous **Leslie Abrams** was in San Diego when my

daughter **Ileana** and I were there for a medical convention. It was the year that **Big Brown** was supposed to win the Triple Crown. **Leslie** says her job at **UCSD** is radically changing since they are doing away with all the subject libraries. **Leslie** will now be the director of a "new" program, Information Development and Management, including preservation and scholarly communication. Responsible for all collections, all formats, and soon she will begin constructing a new program. And **Leslie** will remain the head of the Arts Library until June 2013. She says she will probably be coming to the **Conference** every year! By coincidence, we have an interview with **Peter Brueggeman** (Scripps Institute of Oceanography, UCSD), this issue, p.56. Another coincidence—an article in this issue by the awesome **Martha Hruska** (UCSD) on patron-driven acquisitions (p.30).

And, finally, here are the scholarship and contest winners for **2012 Charleston!**

Library Connect Charleston Conference Award goes to **Maliaca Oxnam**, Associate Librarian, **University of Arizona**.

<http://libraryconnect.elsevier.com/articles/supporting-users-organizations/2012-10/maliaca-oxnam-wins-2012-library-connect-charleston>

Harrassowitz Charleston Conference Scholarship goes to **Chris Bullock**, Electronic Resources Librarian, **Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville**.

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Back Talk — It is Getting Very Crowded Under Publisher Buses These Days

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Recently, **ALA's** President **Maurine Sullivan** published an open letter to the information world about the refusal of **Simon & Schuster**, **Macmillan**, and **Penguin** to provide U.S. public libraries with access to their eBooks (See An Open Letter to America's Publishers <http://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/e-content/open-letter-america-s-publishers>).

Basically, in my view, **Sullivan** made three points:

1. It is "strange" that these publishers are refusing to sell their eBooks to America's 169 million public library readers, 66% of whose libraries provide eBooks and spend \$1.3 billion dollars annually on all content.
2. Their action denies public library eBook readers access to about one-half of the books on the *New York Times* best-seller fiction list.
3. Other publishers are not acting like this. Some are even making it easy for their patrons to buy their own eBooks if their library lacks the books they want, or if their library has the title but the reader doesn't want to stay in the cue waiting for the book they want to become available.

Why are these publishers acting so strangely? Is it simple greed? Is it because some of them want to make up for their share of the \$169 million fine, which they had to pay for their eBook price

fixing scheme? Last year **Simon & Schuster** made \$134 million in digital revenues and so their share of the fine no doubt hurt a bit (See Profits Rise Again at Simon and Schuster <http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/publisher-news/article/50709-profits-rise-again-at-simon--schuster.html>).

My best guess is that it is the greed factor and/or the fear of seeing the print profits they have previously enjoyed erode is the main reason for turning on libraries. To illustrate this, let me borrow the "throw X under the bus" idiom that is so popular these days in politics. That is, the willingness of friends to sacrifice others for personal gain (See Wikipedia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Throw_under_the_bus).

In the past, authors, publishers and libraries had to be at least passing friends for each to prosper. Authors write; publishers polish, market and sell; and libraries buy what they publish. Libraries are among the prime buyers of the written word, for university presses almost the only buyers. For the fiction published by these three super publishers libraries must consume a significant share of the books they publish each year.

Some would say publishers have long thrown authors under the bus in order to wring as much money out of each book as they can. With the exception of textbook writers and those non-fiction writers who successfully write their view

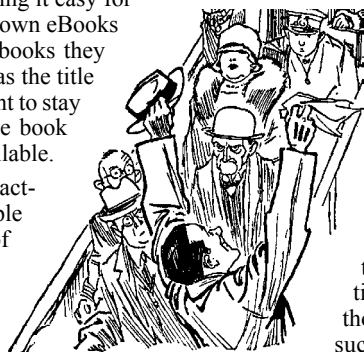
of the truth for the masses, non-fiction writers rejoice when their manuscripts are accepted with no thought of getting paid. Academic authors' pay comes from grants and tenure. And publishers with equal rejoicing toss these authors under the bus and claim they are doing a public service to share the words of most authors with the scholarly world. Most fiction writers also exchange their manuscripts with publishers for the possibility of fame and very little money. Starving writers after all enjoy the aura of nobility. Even successful authors complain the size of their readership is limited by publishers pricing their books too high to attract as many readers as they might. Thus, more often than not, both fiction and non-fiction authors go under the publisher's bus in the name of making money.

In the present era while publishers have continued to survive, bookstores and book jobbers have also gone under the bus. eBooks, after all, are sold either directly to the reader or via **Amazon** or **iTunes** for a much smaller share of the book price than previously given bookstores to pay for their building, heating, cooling, promotion, and staffing costs. We are all familiar with the fate of the **B. Dalton Bookseller**, **Crown Books**, and **Borders** book shops. While **Barnes and Noble** is trying to cover all the bases with their Nook to succeed where others have failed, the future of most bookstores continues to be in doubt. (For more on this see The Bookstore's Last Stand <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/29/business/barnes-noble-taking-on-amazon-in-the-fight-of-its-life.html?pagewanted=all>).

That **Sullivan** resorted to an open letter to bring the library world's attention to the how public libraries are being treated is a sign to me that she feels libraries are also being thrown under the publisher bus. I realize my academic librarian colleagues are rolling their eyes when they read this last sentence since they have experienced having the STM publishers' bus run back and forth over their bodies for the past three decades.

For me, I don't see why these publishers feel they have so much to fear from libraries. My own experience with borrowing eBooks from public libraries is fairly negative.

It seems that no matter how many copies of what I want to read which the **Pima County Library** buys, these copies are all checked out and the waiting list to read one of these books is always extremely long. For example, I recently checked on how many of the top 15 *New York Times* best selling fiction titles were available for my Kindle. Unfortunately, I found they had only bought four of these titles and none were available for reading. For *Fifty Shades of Grey* my county library system had purchased 50



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