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Little Red Herrings-Now, Don't Go Chasing Rabbits

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now have opportunities to experiment with new pricing and access models. As technology improves and the desire for knowledge increases, demand for content in online education will continue to grow.

How are MOOCs changing the provision of content to students?

FL: I think there are two sides to this question. First, the type of content being provided to students is limited by the resources a school has available for creating that MOOC. We hear from MOOC instructors that they want to provide the richest learning experience possible to their students at a higher education standard. Sometimes openly available free content is appropriate, but sometimes it's also necessary to require or recommend readings from content under copyright. The work and cost involved for a school in these cases is prohibitive, and the **SIPX** service is a solution to these problems. In addition, **SIPX**'s analytics provide hard data for better understanding the continuing changes in content and education.

Second, we also need to look at how students are consuming MOOCs and the content within. In most cases, a MOOC student's motivations for taking the class are different from an on-campus student that commits (through tuition and degree incentives) to finishing the entire class. For example, the MOOC student might only be interested in one or two key topics, or only want a high-level overview. So a one-coursepack/textbook-fits-all mentality won't work for every student in the class, and the **SIPX** service opens up options and empowers students to make their own choices.

What type of content is attractive to MOOC instructors?

HS: MOOC instructors want the best supporting materials for their students, whether that content is subscription-based, open access, or public domain. We're seeing interest in articles, book chapters, newspaper, and magazine content. Thus, **SIPX** works with all types of publishers whose titles cut across all subjects and disciplines.

What has the response been like to date?

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FL: There's definitely broad and deep interest in the **SIPX** service, ranging from school faculty, librarians and management, school consortiums, as well as MOOC providers and the content industry, and we are ramping up with schools and content partners quickly. I feel that the main reason is because we solve a real problem felt across a huge, fragmented ecosystem; as the first end-to-end service that connects all the players and creates an efficient,

logical network. The efficiencies through the **SIPX** platform are obvious — there are cost-saving benefits of license filtering (the ability to recognize and apply pre-existing rights from complex licenses such as library subscriptions), easy pay-per-use channels now open, analytics for better collections and pricing decisions, more efficient use of human resources, better copyright education on campus, and reduced infringement liability. 🌸

Little Red Herrings — Now, Don't Go Chasing Rabbits

by **Mark Y. Herring** (Dean of Library Services, Dacus Library, Winthrop University) <herringm@winthrop.edu>

The *Ithaca U.S. Faculty Survey 2012* (<http://bit.ly/10NnQw9>) is out, and by the time you read my blur, it will have cobwebs on it, and the 2013 will be well on the way. So, why write about it at all? First, it's always important to find out what people think of you, in this case, libraries and their main clientele, faculty, even if what you find out may need a dozen qualifications surrounding it. Second, we librarians live, as the saying goes, in interesting times. Libraries and librarians are either on the cusp of something new and exciting, or on the edge of the abyss, soon to fall into oblivion, so finding out what people think should be important to us. Finally, if we listen carefully, we may be able to strengthen the good and weaken the bad, so why not take a peek?

I am not the first to take this on, by any means. **Barbara Fister** had her say (<http://bit.ly/16XCmou>), as did **Wayne Bivens-Tatum** (<http://bit.ly/12o09i6>), so if you don't like what you read here, you can also go there. There are, of course many others who have commented upon it. But I am less concerned about what library bloggers have to say about such studies than what workaday librarians think about them, assuming they have time to read them among all their other regular duties.

In a word, the study indicates that faculty, one of our main clients, don't think libraries all that important any more. The previous *Ithaca Study* said about the same thing, as have other studies, such as the **Educause's ECAR Study of Undergraduate**

Students and Information Technology, 2012 (<http://bit.ly/U9NbSs>).

Neither faculty nor students think they need libraries all that much. Faculty tell us that apart from the databases they cannot afford, they don't use the library that much. Even then, they turn to us only when they cannot find what they need on the Web. Students tell us in the **Educause Study** that, while the library Website is important, other technologies are far more important, such as course management systems and, of course, our *bête noire*, Google.

What should we make of all this? Here's what I think. First of all, the studies *are* important. They aren't the be-all and the end-all, but they help us balance the anecdotal evidence we may hear from day to

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Oregon Trails — Collecting What You Read and Why

Column Editor: **Thomas W. Leonhardt** (Retired, Eugene, OR 97404) <oskibear70@gmail.com>

On April 16, I attended a special reception at the **Eric V. Hauser Memorial Library** on the **Reed College** campus. The winners of the **2013 Reed College Book Collecting Contest**, co-sponsored by the **Himes & Duniway Society**, were announced and all participants were honored and asked to say a few words about their collections. The essays with annotated bibliographies are available (five essays at this writing) at <http://www.himesduniway.org/>. “This contest is a part of a nationwide college book collecting contest with the local winner entered as a participant in the **The National Collegiate Book Collecting Contest**. This national level contest is supported by the **Antiquarian Booksellers Association of America (ABAA)**, the **Fellowship of American Bibliophilic Societies (FABS)**, the **Center for the Book and the Rare Books and Special Collections Division of the Library of Congress**.” (<http://www.himesduniway.org/>)

When you go to the Website and read those essays, you will be inspired and humbled by the efforts of these college students. The winning essay, “How to be Alone,” is by **Mack Sullivan**. Just as I thought that I had my own list (not annotated) of books to last me, in retirement, for the rest of my life, I come across this incredibly thoughtful, articulate, and learned essay and have extended my list but in translation having never acquired much Latin and not even a smattering of Greek.

The other essays are winners, too, either a second or third prize or honorable mention (all of the remaining essays). There are no losers in this contest. Only one will be entered in the national contest but in competitions of this sort, as acknowledged by the judges, the difference between placements are razor thin. Read the essays and decide for yourself and then articulate the reasons for your choices. You will then see for yourself to understand the difficulties that faced the judges.

One of the students collects illustrated books and not necessarily first editions. For those who fear that deep pockets are a hindrance to collecting, let this be an encouraging note. It helps if the book is in good condition and that all of the illustrations are intact, but beyond that, it is a matter of personal taste. One need not restrict oneself to one’s native language, English, for example, in order to collect attractively illustrated books. Children’s books represent most of

the current illustrated books, especially fiction, but there are many exceptions. This student, wanting to encourage support of a local press, gave away copies of illustrated books published by **Good Ink**, an imprint of **Scout Books** (www.scoutbooks.com), a Portland, Oregon publisher. The book that I chose is *The Story of an Hour and other Stories*, by **Kate Chopin** and illustrated by **Gemma Correll**.

The day after the reception, I had to fly to Boston for a meeting. I don’t have a Nook or a Kindle, preferring paperbacks when I travel. *The Story of an Hour* fit in my shirt pocket and I didn’t have to power it down when the plane’s cabin doors were closed. Instead, I clicked on the overhead reading light and leaned back to enjoy **Kate Chopin’s** sense of humor. She would have made much of modern America.

College students are not only reading, they are collecting their favorite books and thinking about what they collect and why and continue. Aesthetics apply to the illustrated books but the other collections are reflections of intellectual interests and a drive to be educated beyond the classroom. These students, I call them curious undergraduates, are the ones I used to buy for. The students I met and listened to at **Reed** were living proof that curious (intellectually, that is) undergraduates exist. The national book collecting contest is testimony that we are still producing thoughtful readers and they are not satisfied with having hundreds of books on an eBook reader. Rather, they are content with a smaller number on their shelves where they can be seen, pulled off the shelf at will, held lovingly, opened randomly, perhaps to a hand-notated passage, and then placed gently back on the shelf. A couple of the students noted that some of their favorites had come apart from use and annotation and had to be replaced. Their collections are not museums of books that look good on the shelf but living things full of ideas, information, and sustenance as in “Season to taste: A love affair in cookbooks,” by **Stephanie Bastek**.

More than a decade ago I had occasion to go to **Reed College** for meetings in the library and would arrive before the staff got to work.

The library would be open and I would find students there sleeping, reading, studying, and writing. I would head for the area where the “little magazines” were shelved, a luxury coming from a technical university, and after choosing a couple of those inviting literary journals, would plop myself down in an overstuffed chair situated among other comfortable chairs and sofas, and read until time for my meeting.

I have no idea how many college and university libraries I have visited but it’s more than a handful and of them all, **Reed** has the most bookish atmosphere. I get the feeling that there are nothing but curious undergraduates there and that it is understood that to be well educated is to read broadly and engage in intellectual and not so intellectual discussions that come from that reading and from the heart as well as the head. And in such an atmosphere, it is a matter of course to subscribe to **Anthony Powell’s** notion that *Books Do Furnish a Room*. And it matters which books furnish that room and they must be books that matter, classic titles along with perhaps idiosyncratic titles that have special meaning for the reader. Reading is, after all, a highly personal, private activity.

Some time ago at a conference in which information technology was the theme, a speaker somewhat derisively referred to books as outmoded models of linear thinking. The preferred way to read, to that speaker, was on a computer. The irony, of course, is that reading on a screen that moves up and down or left to right, is literally linear and is a throwback to the scrolls of yore that were made obsolete by the codex, a superior way to present written literature in the age of manuscripts and later when moveable type became available.

I would not be surprised to learn that some, perhaps a majority, of these **Reed** essayists own eBook readers and have assigned them a specific role, but that is not what they turn to as they pursue their bookish passions. They want to see those trusted, cherished companions on bookshelves, piled on desks, littering any available plane surface so that at a whim, the desired volume can be picked up, readily

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day against what the majority believe. That is, you may help students find something that they have not been able to find and they may well shower you with well-deserved praise. They may also fustigate the Web and Google and all the rest because they have been frustrated by their inability to find what they want. The same could be said of that **ABD** faculty member who wants to give you a **Nobel Prize** for finding that

article she’s been looking for, for months. But those are three, or five, or even twenty, of the five thousand or ten thousand or twenty thousand on your campus. What are *they* saying, and if nothing, why? Could it be because they are using something else?

Further, if nothing else, these studies confirm that a) we’re still not telling the library story very well; b) that all the very valuable help we provide is to but a fraction of those who really need us; and c) we really need to come up with a more effective strategy of reaching students and faculty. The current strategy we’re

using just isn’t working, or it isn’t working all that well.

But it doesn’t matter what I think. What do you see in them? By all means, go read the studies. Don’t listen just to me or anyone else. Read them for yourself. And then, let’s not put our heads in the sand about them when they reveal something we don’t want to hear. These studies are not the library’s Armageddon, nor should they be shoved down Alice’s Rabbit Hole of nonsense. And while I’m on the allusion kick, let me end with this: Let’s learn from them what we can in order to avoid a Waterloo of our own making. 🐘