June 2013

Issues in Vendor/Library Relations-Indianapolis

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Recommended Citation

Nardini, Bob (2013) "Issues in Vendor/Library Relations-Indianapolis," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 25: Iss. 3, Article 40.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.6547>

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Collecting to the Core from page 78

this topic in his 2010 work *Rethinking the Power of Maps*.⁴

In 1995, **Alan MacEachren** wrote *How Maps Work: Representation, Visualization, and Design*.⁵ *How Maps Work* is the most comprehensive of the monographs discussed in this essay, and a book which **Monmonier** calls a *tour de force* for academic cartography. In over 500 pages, **MacEachren** presents a deep cognitive-semiotic discussion of cartography, proving that to fully understand maps and how they work individuals need to know the many divergent ways in which maps can represent information. **MacEachren** departs from **Robinson** and **Monmonier's** depictions of the map as a communication tool and argues that it is through semiotics and symbols that users perceive and understand cartographic representations. He also addresses the then-nascent field of geovisualization and how its tools and technologies change maps from presentation tools into a "thinking-knowledge construction process" that relies on human interaction and exploration for knowledge creation. **MacEachren** pioneered writing about geovisualization and how it would affect the ways in which many academic disciplines consume and analyze information. Nearly twenty years

old, this book is every bit as relevant today as at its first publication.

Each of these books represents a foundational work in the field of critical cartography and helps highlight the evolution of map analysis. They all belong in the core collection of any academic library supporting programs in geography and any other discipline that relies on maps and other geographic visualization models to represent data in teaching and research. 🌳

Endnotes

1. **Robinson, Arthur H., and Barbara Bartz Petchenik.** *The Nature of Maps*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1976.*
2. **Monmonier, Mark.** *How to Lie with Maps*. 2nd ed. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996.*
3. **Wood, Denis.** *The Power of Maps*. New York, NY: Guilford Press, 1992.*
4. **Wood, Denis.** *Rethinking the Power of Maps*. New York, NY: Guilford Press, 2010.
5. **MacEachren, Alan M.** *How Maps Work: Representation, Visualization, and Design*. New York, NY: Guilford Press, 1995.*

Editor's note: An asterisk () denotes a title selected for *Resources for College Libraries*.

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Issues in Vendor/Library Relations — Indianapolis

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Today we have a lot of ways not to travel to meetings, once you add up teleconference, Webcast, Webex, Webinar, E-forums, video chatting, all for "live" meetings, or podcasts and streaming video for after the fact. Soon I'll have one more, since the company I work for, **Ingram**, plans to install videoconferencing, another way to save on the travel time, travel costs, and general wear and tear of actually going somewhere to talk to people. I am sure there will be many meeting occasions when we'll be thankful for the chance to stay put.

On the other hand, we'll probably feel a little cheated now and then, since as most people who travel in their jobs would tell you, it's all worth it, sometimes at least. One thing lost, in an untraveled meeting, is the transition period, that zone when you're not at home, not at work, not there yet. You're on the way, maybe all by yourself, and maybe these in-between times are your only chance to be out of reach for a little while, your best opening to take a stab at organizing your thoughts. As miserable an experience as getting there can be, as any frequent flyer knows all too well, there are times it feels like a ration of grace.

As a heartland city, you can drive to Indianapolis from lots of places, Columbus or Chicago in three hours, St. Louis or Detroit in

four or five, Pittsburgh in six, Kansas City or even from Atlanta in eight. For me, the drive to attend this year's meeting of the **Association of College and Research Libraries** was five hours, due north on I-65 from Nashville. Signs for the National Corvette Museum in Bowling Green are always my marker for having left Tennessee and entered Kentucky, where the next couple of hours or so are through wooded hills whose underlying limestone, visible at a couple of highway blasting sites, accounts for some of the world's largest caves, and those roadside signs announcing Hidden River Cave, Horse Cave, Kentucky Down Under, and the most famous of these geological attractions, Mammoth Cave.

There's also Dinosaur World, in Cave City, whose ambassador is a giant T-Rex menacing the highway, and further on, signs for the **Abraham Lincoln** Birthplace, for Fort Knox, and then for the Kentucky Bourbon Trail and its distillery highlights Maker's Mark and Jim Beam. By then, the land has opened up, the Blue Grass Parkway would take you east toward Lexington, and soon you are upon the headquarters of the UPS cargo aircraft fleet,

adjacent to Louisville Airport and larger in its own right than many passenger airports, and a few minutes from there the Ohio River bridge crossing, Louisville behind you and the straight, flat homestretch before your first view of the Oz-like Indianapolis skyline, maybe two hours ahead.

According to *USA Today* that morning, companies are planning on more convention and business travel this year, loosening policies from the recession. So I was part of a trend in my five-hour drive, along with some 2,000 librarians who each had made their own trip to Indianapolis. The first librarian I recognized was a library school professor whose class I had spoken to a couple of times. She was there to give a poster session and had a tube slung over her shoulder. She wasn't sure how the class would run this coming year, she told me, since the entire program was going online. Classes would no longer meet in person. Maybe she'd ask me to put on a Web presentation. She'd figure something out. In any case, library education, apparently, was heading in a different direction than business travel.

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That's not a direction everyone favors, according to a student at this very same school, who had written a letter to the editor published in *Library Journal*, in an issue I picked up for free at the LJ booth. She found the switch to online "disturbing," and said that many classmates felt the same way. She'd taken courses both ways, and preferred face-to-face. "Some of my most illuminating learning experiences," she said, "have come from heated class discussion. I have yet to have a heated class discussion from an online class."

This young librarian-to-be signed her letter from Indianapolis, so she was likely at **ACRL**, a good place to make your mark by giving a paper or presenting a poster or at least hearing about what other librarians are doing, while building up your network and maybe even finding a heated discussion or two. There aren't enough seats in the **Indiana Convention Center's** large hallway connecting the meeting rooms, so you could usually see quite a few younger attendees sitting on the floor in the time between programs, the wall a backrest, working their phones and tablets, blogging, posting, tweeting, or maybe just messaging or emailing from Indianapolis.

No doubt they had things to say about the presentation they'd just heard, but they probably had something to say about Indianapolis, too, since critiquing the host city is one of the things you always do at a conference. You'll hear complaints no matter what city it is — about the hills or the street people in San Francisco, about the heat or the cold in Chicago, or in the case of Indianapolis, some people rolled their eyes at the very idea of having to be there. But others registered pleasant surprise, over a museum they'd found, for instance. "What's all this Western stuff I'm seeing here?" one librarian remarked to me, after a look at the nearby Eiteljorg Museum, an Indianapolis shrine to Western art and culture founded by one of the city's philanthropists.

Back at the convention, for those younger librarians sitting on the floor, **ACRL** is a mixed experience, online and face-to-face both. The face-to-face experiences will often be with people they're meeting for the first time. That's as opposed to those of us who've attended enough conferences that it's hard in mind to sort out one from another. Most of our face-to-face conference involves people we already know, like the professor I spoke

to. There are the people you work with, many of which, for a vendor, might not work from your own location; so while you may have emailed them yesterday, a conference is a good chance to talk over in person whatever business is at hand.

Then there are the people you used to work with. If you've been on the vendor side for awhile, this can be a lot of people. In fact, if you had some reason to keep score, your face-to-face count in this category could be highest of all. Some of these people might also have attended every last conference you ever did, and you've either worked side-by-side with them or have said hello from your respective booths for many years running. Others you might have lost track of, or have had only infrequent contact, so these encounters are sometimes warm and fuzzy. Either way, there's a bond to be acknowledged, and depending on how friendly you are or were with them, on whether they work for a competitor or have moved on to some other kind of business, and on how much time both of you have to spare, this type of conference encounter might be perfunctory or might wind up long after hours, with you sharing just one more drink.

And let's not forget the people you do business with. For vendors and librarians alike, this conference category encompasses quite a range of possibilities, from early morning breakfasts to late night dinners, to scheduled booth meetings, to unscheduled booth visits, to casual hallway or sidewalk encounters, to intense hours-long sessions booked for a suite, to most anything in between. It's important for vendors to have contact, even brief contact, with as many customers as possible, and important for librarians to have easy access to their vendors, for those occasions when they want or need that. Making yourself available at the booth is one way to accomplish this. Receptions, where conversations can be virtually non-stop, short conversations one upon the next, people lining up or clustering around to talk to you, or you to them, almost like an autograph session sometimes, for vendor or library individuals in highest demand, are another, a wholesale method, one everyone enjoys, for compressing a lot of contacts into a short period of time.

Encounters with people you hope to do business with, or are thinking about it, fit well enough into the category above. The tone of these conversations might be different, depending upon where things stand on this business, upon how well you know each other, upon how long you have been talking, and of course upon the setting, a booth conversation

likely with a different shape than what the same people might say to one another at cocktail hour. But business is business, and no matter the particulars these vendor-library conference conversations are an experience category you come to recognize.

On the last day of **ACRL** I had a conference encounter with someone I used to work with. Often, again, these conversations are with people you have known for a long time. You catch up on news about other members of your cohort, and as each year turns you find yourself more routinely talking about surgeries, strokes, deaths sometimes. From the blaring convention floor, you pay respects together to a stricken friend a thousand miles off. But this conversation was different. At first I didn't recognize my former colleague. I hadn't seen her for years, and we hadn't worked together for such long time in the first place.

As she approached our booth I thought at first that she was another smart young librarian like the ones I'd seen twittering in the corridor. She saw I didn't recognize her and introduced herself — reintroduced really, slightly hesitant. Of course, look at the name badge. How stupid. It was good to see her and I said so. She reciprocated. We made small talk, talked about people we knew. She'd been promoted, she said. I'd probably helped to train her back then.

This was her first **ACRL**, Indianapolis, and for all I know her first library conference. **ACRL** is much smaller than **ALA**, much less intense than **Charleston**. In a way it distills down this part of your world so that you can almost see it, see things move in a way that's normally not visible to you. Not in a Webcam, for sure. You can see the young librarians moving in and out of presentation rooms, or clustering around podiums as halls empty, or talking intensely to one another, gesturing, their conference programs in hand. You can watch as they make their way through the conference, pushing off on new careers. I was happy my young former colleague took the trouble to look me up. And I think she was glad to have spotted me.

It was a conference encounter alright, but one I couldn't categorize. Not what I'd call a passing of the torch, but even so, one generation paying respects to another, in both directions. All around us this little world of ours of academic library conferences was renewing itself in Indianapolis. She was a part of that. And I had a poignant minute or so — which is about as long as conference moments tend to last — enjoying the fact that so was I. 🍷

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Tourette's syndrome found salvation in books and weight-lifting. The book is on my reading list and I just bought a copy for the library — *The World's Strongest Librarian: A Memoir of Tourette's, Faith, Strength, and the Power*

of Family. Just reviewed on *The New Yorker Website*!

<http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/books/2013/05/a-strongman-in-the-library.html>

In closing, I want to wish **HAPPY BIRTHDAY** to one of my favorite men in the whole world! **ANTHONY WATKINSON!** Anthony's daughter **Ruth** took him to the **Re-**

form Club (what a place!). The RC Kitchen produced a small pistachio-flavored cake (mm good!) that had 65 on it, the waiting staff sang and a good time was had by all, and no one is any the wiser! Happy Birthday, **Anthony**, a bit late! And one last note — did y'all see the picture on page one of this issue? It's **Anthony** reading to his grandson. 🍷