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Issues in Vendor/Library Relations-Incense

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steps) to investigate, and while **EBSCO** is structured to help libraries with the four metrics mentioned above, there are other statistics libraries should consider that may require some digging. Did we get our users to the right place? How can we streamline and increase that traffic? Did they end sessions before clicking on a record? Did they conduct multiple similar searches because results weren't what they considered "great"? Did we get them to the full text quickly and easily? And if not, where did we lose them?

Can librarians study the value of the results and the users' perceptions of whether they quickly got the best results from their library experience? Have libraries conducted studies of user behavior and experience similar to the C&RL study conducted by **Bucknell University** and **Illinois Wesleyan University**? (<http://crl.acrl.org/content/early/2012/05/07/crl-374.full.pdf+html>) Users can tell us more than simple statistics. And it may be these "unavailable" statistics that can help us better understand user behavior and potential solutions to close the gap between end user need and ultimate library success. It's our users who determine the answer to the opening question: How would you depict the ultimate measure of library success? The answer from our users is likely very simple — results. And our path to getting there is becoming more clear. 🌿

Issues in Vendor/Library Relations — Incense

Column Editor: **Bob Nardini** (Vice President, Product Development, Ingram Library Services) <bob.nardini@ingramcontent.com>

Last year my wife and I moved into a house built in the 1930s that had been occupied since the 1950s by the family we bought it from. That's a lot of living, the 1950s through 2012, and whenever you move into a new space, it doesn't always feel quite like yours. Scent, of course, is powerfully evocative, and one of the things that sometimes makes the house seem as much theirs as ours is that it can still smell like theirs. There's nothing unpleasant in that, but there are moments when an essence of the prior household, unfamiliar to us, rises up out of the floorboards.

So my wife likes to burn incense. For that we have an unusual ceramic incense holder, a gift to us. It's light blue, the color of warm ocean, and shaped like a wave, a curling crest of water featuring a scalloped sea shell emblem rolling toward a narrow channel of blue an inch or so wide and ten inches long, a trough perfect to catch ash and spare you a powdery gray mess. The ash falls from an incense stick positioned above the trough, inserted into a small hole in the scallop shell at a forty-five degree angle out of the wave's crest.

"I made 15,000 of them myself," **Sol Young** tells me. I've always replied when asked that

the thing I've enjoyed most about being in this business for years is the people you get to meet and sometimes work with. Some of the best relationships I've had, as a member of what's frequently called "the business side" of the business, have been with IT colleagues. This has been a good thing, since believe me, for the right things to happen with a library vendor, the "business side" and IT need to be getting on.

For the past couple of years **Sol** has been my colleague at **Ingram**, where he heads the development group at **MyiLibrary**, our eBook platform. When **Sol** was a teenager, his introduction to the business world was about as far away from eBooks as I can think of, as a maker of incense holders. "It was a great way to make money," says **Sol**, who made no money on his gift to me, but who began selling incense holders in a big way when he was fourteen.

"I was raised by hippies," he says, in a small town in northern California's Mendocino County. His parents had moved there from southern California, looking for an escape from the dense urban or suburban life available in that part of the state. When I met **Sol** I thought he was Jewish, but his parents hadn't named him

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"Solomon," they named him "Sol," after the sun, from Spanish. The first house he remembers, in fact, ran on solar power, and had no radio, no television, no bathroom, no running water.

But there was a kiln and always plenty of clay around, since his parents were skilled potters. Sol began to experiment. One year his father brought Sol to the Oregon Country Fair, a long-running crafts event and site of a legendary 1972 Grateful Dead concert, in Veneta, a small city near Eugene. Sol brought a supply of incense holders, and by the second day of the event, working from their small booth, he'd sold out. A distributor left his card and asked Sol if he wanted to put his incense holders into retail stores.

Sol said no, he didn't need the help. He tried calling on stores himself, but "selling is hard," he found. Not many storekeepers would pay attention to a peddling teenager. He went back to the distributor and made a deal. Sol would produce holders by the gross. The distributor took all he could make. Sol hired friends to help make more. He sold to the distributor at \$2-\$4, the distributor sold to stores at \$5-\$7, and in the end, enough store customers had brought home an incense holder, at \$10-\$20, that at age 17, Sol was able to buy a Mazda MX-3, brand new off the lot. "I could have grown so much bigger," he reflects today.

Instead he left incense behind and went off to college to study computers. As a boy, Sol had had his hands not just on clay, but on a keyboard too, since his grandfather, a Cal Poly physics professor, had taught him to program at a young age. His first job in the computer industry was to test video games for a Silicon Valley company. A couple of quick promotions later and Sol was a software engineer for the company.

Then the .com bubble burst. The business was sold and Sol found himself working in Pennsylvania as a senior engineer for a company making a video-voice chat system. While they had deals with companies like Verizon and Comcast, the product didn't take off. Sol did take off, however, to a company making audio-books. Ingram acquired that company in 2008, and today Sol has moved on from audio-books to eBooks. He's now head of a development team responsible for the MyiLibrary eBook platform, meaning he is responsible for well over 400,000 eBooks used by over 100,000 readers from over 50 countries around the world.

Developing software, it turns out, is something like working in clay after all. You start with an idea. Then through trial and error you get the bugs out and bring your creation to market. In his ceramic days, Sol began by gluing a real seashell to the crest of his incense holders. But the shells would fall off, so he molded the clay to look like a shell. The glaze caused bugs too, since at 2400 degrees Fahrenheit, if you weren't careful — if the glaze ran down the incense hole, for instance — you didn't end up with a holder, but with "a piece of stone."

Today, then, when students from the UAE to the USA to the Ukraine open an eBook and get what they need, that may be due to lessons learned years ago in clay and incense. For Sol, it's been a long strange trip from that old Grateful Dead site. Seashells and glaze aren't the puzzle today, but in working on pricing models, or archiving, or new methods for file ingestion or for accepting orders, or a user interface, just some of the projects Sol's team has had their hands on, there's always plenty of work, before the glaze finally holds. 🐼

Oregon Trails — Make Mine Ham-on-Rye!

Column Editor: **Thomas W. Leonhardt** (Retired, Eugene, OR 97404)
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"Hay-on-Wye lies on the Welsh side of the Welsh/English Border in the County of POWYS, Wales. Although as far as the Royal Mail is concerned, it is better, apparently, to use the County of HEREFORDSHIRE, not to be confused with the county of HERTFORDSHIRE; a very popular mistake! You will notice, after browsing our Hay site, that the majority of the postal addresses are either 'via Hereford' or 'Herefordshire.' It is purely for postal reasons!"

— Hay-on-Wye Website: <http://www.hay-on-wye.co.uk/info/hay-on-wye.htm>

Just once, before I die ... I'd like to visit Hay-on-Wye.

Why Hay-on-Wye (a bookseller wag calls it Ham-on-Rye)? I can give you at least 25 reasons, each one a second-hand bookseller except for one who specializes in maps, surely including atlases, and atlases are books after all.

Last October my hopes were high while visiting my wife's brother in Yorkshire. As the crow flies, it isn't that far from the Harrogate area to Hay-on-Wye, but we were not traveling on a crow but in a car and over 200 miles of roads that the Romans didn't build. The Romans preferred straight roads going from point A to point B, but the natives were mostly farmers and even after the industrial revolution set in, villages were connected by roads that wandered along rivers or as the terrain dictated. So instead of spending an entire day traveling and figuring another for our return, and since we were there for only two weeks, we decided to visit some shops in York and plan a trip to Wales when we had more time.

So instead of ham-on-rye, I had to settle for Welsh rarebit at the Wensleydale Creamery, home of Wensleydale cheese. But at the bottom of the hill from the creamery where the village of Hawes lies, there is a second-hand bookshop. The owner seemed more inclined to talk to himself about where to place the books in his arms than to greet and welcome prospective book buyers. I didn't really care whether he wanted me there or not, I was there for the books. Time was limited so I settled on a single book, *Iris Murdoch's The Good Apprentice* (Chatto & Windus, first edition in dust jacket). I handed the book and £20 to the bookseller who, without emitting a sound or making eye contact, wrote out a receipt and handed me my change. I picked up my *Iris Murdoch* and walked away, keeping silent, too, but pleased with my purchase and, moreover, I kept to my rule about buying at least one book in a second-hand shop. My rule

now had an addendum: Buy at least one book even when encountering a silently crabby bookseller.

A few months later, I was back in England, this time for a month, with the promise that we would depart for Hay-on-Wye early one morning so that we could arrive around noon time and spend the afternoon browsing in those magical bookshops where I hoped to find some English editions of the authors I collect and maybe an item or two that I knew not of. We would spend the night and perhaps, after an English breakfast of fried eggs, fried bread, fried bacon, fried tomatoes, and beans, I would have a couple more hours of book hunting before we had to hit the road.

Sparing the reader the details, suffice it to say that early in the second week there Hay-on-Wye as a dream come true became just a dream, a dream that lingers and that will not die, at least not for a good while, I hope. But it was well-established that I liked "a good browse," so my weakness was accommodated whenever possible.

Knaresborough, North Yorkshire. I was let out of the car in front of **Abbey Antiquarian Books**, 3 Abbey Lane. It was 8:45 a.m. so I figured that I had a fifteen minute wait. I peered in the windows of the shop where antiques were also on display. Nothing I saw through the windows piqued my interest; it was what I couldn't see that set my imagination on fire. Somewhere on those dark shelves was a languishing, undiscovered copy of *The Eighth Sin*, **Christopher Morley's** first book, published in 1912 by **B.H. Blackwell**, Broad Street, Oxford, a collection of poems issued while Morley was a Rhodes Scholar attending **New College**.

Nine a.m. came and went, and at half past nine I gave up and began walking up Briggate towards the main part of town, planning to return at 10 a.m. when I was confident I would find an "Open" sign on the door.

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