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The Peripatetic Browser: Browsing on the Bayou

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ne Saturday morning, last October, I decided to travel to New Orleans to visit bookstores. A quick Google search revealed a pleasing series of rose pins indicating numerous browsing locations. Quickly, I made the two-hour drive from Mobile and was in the French Quarter and my first book store by around 10:00. Faulkner House Books, http://www.faulknerhouse.net/, is a small bookstore of new and rare books. Situated in a quaint alley, I found it a pleasant and cozy boutique with a small selection focused on Southern writers. At this time, I was engrossed in a biography of Percy Bysshe Shelley, so my shopping list included many Romantic authors and I did not browse long.

My next stop was Crescent City Books, http://www.crescentcitybooks.com/, a comfortable location with creaking wooden floors, ratty carpets, and high bookshelves. It contained a varied and well-displayed collection at slightly higher prices than other stores in the city. Around the front desk, there were shelves of old leather-bound volumes with almost unreadable spines. I asked the cashier about other books in the area, and he helpfully provided me with a small New Orleans bookstore map. Before leaving, I flipped through a new copy of The Book Lover’s Guide to New Orleans by Susan Larson displayed at the counter. The book is available on Amazon for those interested in a more in-depth history of New Orleans and its writers.

Before entering Beckham’s Bookshop, http://www.beckhamsbookshop.com/antiquarian-and-rare-books.html/, I waited as two teenagers admired the doors of the “bada** old bookshop.” They went in ahead of me and after rapidly riffling some volumes quickly departed in search of an iced latte. Beckham’s was my favorite book store in the French Quarter, a completely eclectic and disorganized mix that provides the patient browser a wide and well-priced selection. While browsing, I listened to a circular conversation between the cashier and a customer searching for a specific CD. The cashier explained he knew very little about music and that the store had no system of cataloging its CDs so he could not tell her if they had the titles she wanted. She would just have to look.

The third floor, which reeked of cat litter, was a complete chaos of vinyl records at very low prices, most around two dollars, and made it impossible to browse research, comment on, and share all of our published literature in one convenient place.
archiving projects. This chapter effectively illustrates the advances being made in the field of personal digital archiving.

In the final chapter – “The Future of Personal Digital Archiving: Defining the Research Agendas” – Clifford Lynch of the Coalition for Networked Information brings the perspective of three decades of “trying to understand the ways in which information technology and ubiquitous computer communications networks are reshaping the scholarly and cultural record of our civilization.” He explores a dizzying assortment of possibilities for the future of personal digital archiving.

Huffine reviewed the three generally accepted types of OA:

Gold: The cost barrier has been removed by journals with permission of the copyright holder. Gold OA includes journals dedicated to being open, articles in subscription journals, and supplemental data posted to an author-controlled site. Many gold publications are supported by Author Page Charges (APCs).

Green: The content is hosted on an institutional repository or is made available through “self-archiving” by the author or copyright holder. Publishers’ agreements govern what the author may do and what can be deposited in a repository.

Clear (Libre): Public domain content where the cost and usage restrictions have been removed. The main rights management model is a Creative Commons (CC) license. Because data cannot be copyrighted, but a collection of it can, there will continue to be grey areas around derivative works derived from data, and many policies are not clear.

Mandates — policies requiring researchers to make their results freely available — are a recent OA trend. The U.S. Government has tried to legislate OA with little success; many of its proposals have been viewed as efforts to protect publishers’ investments. A recent memo from the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) directs agencies to develop plans supporting increased public access to research funded by the Federal government and requiring access to both the data and the publications. Agencies were required to submit draft plans by August 2013 and begin collecting public input shortly thereafter, but the recent government shutdown severely delayed implementation of this mandate.

Huffine concluded that the ultimate outcome of today’s OA issues may result in a variety of strategies depending on the research discipline and the willingness of researchers, institutional repositories, funders, and publishers to work together.

The Researcher’s Perspective on OA

According to Jean-Claude Bradley, Associate Professor of Chemistry, Drexel University, openness in science is very field-specific because the amount of data to be shared varies significantly. The current research environment has created a selective bias towards which experiments are attempted because ambiguous or negative results are rarely reported in the literature. Bradley has created a “Chemical Rediscovery Survey” by doing a wide variety of experiments and making the data openly available for analysis. He has also assembled a database of data on over 20,000 chemical compounds, much of it donated by chemical companies. By making data openly available, many challenging chemistry questions can be answered more efficiently. Bradley was the first of several speakers who suggested that raw data should be made available before publication of a journal article, not afterwards as is now the case.

Government Responses to Researchers’ Needs

The National Science Foundation (NSF) funds basic research in a wide range of disciplines with a mission to protect our ability to educate the next generation of scientists. Researchers funded by NSF publish their results in a wide variety of journals and are encouraged to make their data available through OA. The OSTP memo is aligned with the goals of NSF, but trust is important to sustain agency policies. NSF has a history of data sharing and fosters Gold OA by permitting researchers to include the APCs in their grant applications.

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