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Little Red Herrings: Collaboration is the New Black

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an old captain on it whom they called *Captain Binnacle*. It is actually my past experience when I was a boy from ten to fourteen." (p. 227, **Jennings, Shirley May**, *A Study of the Genesis of the Twenty-two Published Children's Novels* by **Howard Pease** (Stockton, University of the Pacific unpublished doctoral dissertation, 1969).

The main character in several of the **Pease** novels is **Tod Moran**. I recently bought and re-read *The Jinx Ship* (reprint and not a first) and understood why I read every book of his in the junior high library. **Pease** wrote well and with an adult vocabulary so the notion that he wrote "children's" novels is a bit misleading and inaccurate. He wrote high-sea adventure stories that kept me spell-bound to the last page. He is a highly collectable author, so it is rare to find his books for sale. I don't collect him, not yet, but the prospect is there. Maybe next year. Maybe my favorite second-hand book shop will come into a collection and we can negotiate a deal.

So far my reading had included only one truly great book, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, but I saw it only as a boy's adventure. I was not to discover literature until I attended Department of Defense high schools in West Germany. My eureka moment came when I

saw *The Grapes of Wrath* on a shelf in the high school library. I thought (don't laugh) that it was about the War Between the States, and in a way it was. I loved the book and began reading everything I could find by **Steinbeck**. When he won the **Nobel Prize for Literature** in 1962, I was as happy as if I had won it myself. I still read **Steinbeck**, and I am as moved as ever by his writing.

Hemingway was very popular in the late 1950s, and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* was the first of his books that I read. Alas, he killed himself a couple of weeks after I graduated from high school and had already won the **Nobel Prize**. I admire his writing, too, but there is nothing like a first love, so **Steinbeck** retains the number one position on my list of writers.

Four other authors deserve mention and maintain niches in my pantheon of best books.

James T. Farrell's *Studs Lonigan* trilogy is as fine an example of what was called realism as I know of, but I had never heard of realism or any other ism other than communism in 1960. *Studs Lonigan* was an Irish Catholic who grew up in Chicago during the Great Depression, and the novels *Young Lonigan*, *The Young Manhood of Studs Lonigan*, and *Judgment Day* deserve a place next to *The Grapes of Wrath*. I still remember scenes from that Trilogy after more than fifty years. I have a one-volume edition waiting to be read.

I identified with Phillip Carey, the protagonist in **W. Somerset Maugham's** *Of Human Bondage*. I had no club foot, no stutter, no reason at all to feel sorry for myself, but I was a teenaged boy with my own issues and pain. It's a masterpiece that even now deserves to be read, preferably by teenaged boys.

And finally, there is *Walden* by **Henry David Thoreau**. He awakened my critical thinking and gave me the courage to stand up and be counted at a time and in a place where conformity was not only safe but expected in spite of lip service to rugged individualism. Without **Thoreau** would I have *had* such a visceral and heartfelt dislike of the House Un-American Committee, one of the least American institutions that have ever existed?

No wonder that I still enjoy reading today. No, it is much more. As Thomas Jefferson expressed it so well for me, "Without books I cannot live." As I look at my short list, I think they can rightfully be called "Best Books," and a young person today could do worse. The world is very different now, but great literature, even merely good literature, transcends time and place. I wouldn't want a school to get hold of the list and require that students read my best books, but I wouldn't be averse if some kindly librarian, responding to a young reader hungering for more, to say, "why don't you try one of these?" And as with salted peanuts, you can't stop with just one. 🌰

Little Red Herrings — Collaboration is the New Black

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

Orange may be the new black, but as I have seen only five minutes of that show, I can't really use it here. Besides, based on the five minutes I saw, I would assume it is a series written by males. Not since the **Victoria's Secret** catalog have I seen so many women wearing fewer clothes, or engaging in so many unmentionable acts. I'll stop there because my Victorianism is showing, I'm sure.

Collaboration for libraries may well be the new black but for a serious problem. To say that implies that collaboration is a new thing in libraries when it is as old as **Callimachus** himself. Libraries have always been about collaboration. It's just like everything else we do; we keep it as quiet as our buildings.

Some critics of the stodgy library stereotype have jumped on this as if collaboration were a new thing when it is a very old thing. That first library brought together "books" from everywhere in an effort to bring people together from wherever they were. The idea of a library, like the

idea of a university, was to help people put their heads together. Libraries did this with books first, then with journals, and now with just about everything else you can think of.

We're now collaborating about data and even talking about aggregating it to see if it will tell us a new thing. But therein is the problem. Because it is so big, it's hard to analyze; and like any gargantuan thing, its size is almost all you can talk about. In fact, you hear a great deal about "big data" (not the band but actual data), yet no one really seems to know much else to say about it other than it is big, and there's no good way to get your arms around it. But if we ever can, it will tell us the secrets of the universe.

Big data, like all other buzz words that you can think of, is really dangerous in isolation. If analyzed properly, it may be able to tell us something useful but until we get a better grip on it, we're better off focusing on what we have at hand (i.e., the local collection). I won't say that big data is a fad, but I will say it reminds one of a

missing chapter in a book. You can make great claims about it so long as it never shows up. If we can get a handle on it, it will doubtless lead to better and more expansive collaboration. A useful preliminary on big data is found here (http://www.ala.org/acrl/publications/keeping_up_with/big_data; a contrary one, here <http://timharford.com/2014/04/big-data-are-we-making-a-big-mistake/>).

What is more important than big or little data is the collaboration of the library with the faculty, and area libraries with one another. Again, not a new thing but an old thing with new power. With software like **BePress's** Digital Commons, it's becoming much easier to connect the library with the faculty, faculty with one another, students with each other, and students with faculty. Once these are in place, the library, which should be at the forefront of this collaboration, can extend that sharing to libraries in the region. If enough of this takes place, we may be able to save open access after all.

Meanwhile, libraries are collaborating more with area libraries, and using consortium in the area to expand that collaborative prospect. While consortia have always made it easy to share costs, some are looking at sharing

continued on page 59



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Little Red Herrings from page 58

collections and even staffs when geographical propinquity allows. Public and academic collaborations, now more than a decade old, have caught on in other countries but more slowly here in the U.S.

Libraries are also looking more carefully at collaborative space sharing, combining the library with other academic spaces on campus. New library buildings, if they are being built at all, often include shared spaces with IT, writing labs, technology rooms, and so on. Again, not any of these things are new, but they are getting new looks as universities work hard to get better returns on investment.

Collaborating is also beginning to take place even within the library, but this may be the most difficult of all collaborations to effect. For most of my career, libraries were thought of in terms of public and technical services. Sometimes archives were added to the mix. Today, however, more and more libraries are breaking down these barriers and removing the divisions. Acquisitions units are taking over more of copy cataloging while cataloging proper is headed toward more original cataloging endemic to that library. Public services personnel are no longer tied to the reference desk (if it still exists), but expanding their roles into on-campus labs, dormitories, and faculty classrooms.

Less common but not unheard of are makerspaces (or fablabs, hackerspaces) in academic libraries. These are places where anyone can come in and with others try out new things using tools, software, networks, technologies — you name it — to create whatever it is they wish to create. In any event, it is a place where collaboration can take place.

None of these collaborations take place by themselves. They require good leadership and someone willing to push them forward over the rough spots. It's easy to make a mess of them, hard to make them successful. As mentioned above, making collaboration take place in the library is often the most difficult of all because so many of the people working there have been there for decades. Making these collaborations work means asking them to do something completely different from what they have been doing for years. Most will adapt to the changes but need to be ushered into them.

I don't know about orange being the new black. I would hate to think that what I saw in the five minutes of the show I watched will soon become the norm! But collaboration, as far as libraries go, really is the new black for them. It will soon be as commonplace as s-slips once were.

Let's embrace it while we can. 🌱

Rumors from page 41

The university agreed to the purchase, a single permanent purchase that allows use of the textbook for as long as the faculty want to use it. The faculty had been using the previous edition which had not changed for almost ten years. So they bought the book, assuming the campus would use it with no use restrictions for the foreseeable future, though they only paid one year's worth of per student costs. **Chuck** says that **Christine** wants to follow up to get the word out. This price, **paying the first year of discounted use** means several things. The Publisher gets the full benefit of a complete year worth of student dollars. The book was put in **Moodle** for one class and on **eReserves** for the other class." Hooray! **Christine** and **Martha** and **Chuck** will be attending the **Charleston Conference** this year and since this is a very new development, **Chuck** thought we'd be interested. There will be several pertinent presentations in **Charleston** about textbooks and the November print issue of **ATG** will be guest edited by **Charles Lyons** on "Library Roles with Textbook Affordability." Coming soon!

<http://2014charlestonconference.sched.org>

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