

2015

## Little Red Herrings: The Moving Finger ... Blinks and Having Blinked, Blinks On

Mark Y. Herring

Winthrop University, [herringm@winthrop.edu](mailto:herringm@winthrop.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg>



Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Herring, Mark Y. (2017) "Little Red Herrings: The Moving Finger ... Blinks and Having Blinked, Blinks On," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 27: Iss. 2, Article 39.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.7063>

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact [epubs@purdue.edu](mailto:epubs@purdue.edu) for additional information.

#### Decoder Ring Endnotes — from page 70

1. **John Allison**, *Bobbins*. Accessed Mar 8, 2015, <http://www.scarygoround.com/bobbins/index-archive.php>.
2. **Wizard Entertainment**, "A Ride on the 'Scary Go Round.'" Accessed Mar 8, 2015 via *Internet Archive*, <http://web.archive.org/web/20070106224806/http://www.wizarduniverse.com/magazine/wizard/002913299.cfm>.
3. **John Allison**, "Scary Go Round Archive," *Scary Go Round*. Accessed Mar 8, 2015, <http://www.scarygoround.com/sgr/>.
4. **John Allison**, "Scary Go Round Archive :: September 2, 2008," *Scary Go Round*. Accessed Mar 8, 2015, <http://www.scarygoround.com/sgr/ar.php?date=20080902>.
5. **John Allison**, "Scary Go Round Comics by John Allison, September 21, 2009," *Scary Go Round*. Accessed Mar 8, 2015, <http://scarygoround.com/index.php?date=20090921>.
6. **John Allison**, "On Continuity," *A Hundred Dance Moves per Minute*, Mar 5, 2015, accessed Mar 8, 2015, <http://sgrblog.blogspot.co.uk/2015/03/on-continuity.html>.
7. **Jerry Spiller**, "Comic Book Markup Language" in Decoder Ring, *Against the Grain*, vol. 26#5.
8. **TopatoCo**, "TopatoCo: Scary Go Round." *TopatoCo*. Accessed Mar 8, 2015, [http://www.topatoco.com/merchant.mvc?Screen=CTGY&Store\\_Code=TO&Category\\_Code=SGR](http://www.topatoco.com/merchant.mvc?Screen=CTGY&Store_Code=TO&Category_Code=SGR).
9. **John Allison**, "John Allison's Luxury Emporium," *Scary Go Round*. Accessed Mar 8, 2015, <http://shop.scarygoround.com/>.
10. **OniPress**. Accessed Mar 8, 2015, <http://onipress.com>.
11. **Steve Sunu**, "'Bad Machinery's' John Allison Talks 15 Years of Webcomics, Looks to the Future," *Comic Book Resources*, December 2, 2014, accessed Mar 8, 2015, <http://www.comicbookresources.com/?page=article&id=57458>.
12. "Boom Studios Announces New Imprint: Boom! Box, An Experimental Line of Titles Created Just for the Love of It," *Boom Studios*, November 22, 2013, accessed Mar 8, 2015, <http://blog.boom-studios.com/2013/11/boom-studios-announces-new-imprint-boom-box-an-experimental-line-of-titles-created-just-for-the-love-of-it/>.
13. **John Allison**, "On Continuity."

## Little Red Herrings — The Moving Finger...Blinks, and Having Blinked, Blinks On

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

At the end of February, amid the snow and the false alarms for snow and ice, came the following headline: "Why Digital Natives Prefer Reading in Print — And Yes You Read that Right!" (<http://wapo.st/1BcFIZo>). No, it didn't come from the pen of this column's author (though it could have), nor did it come from any number of those whom some wish to brand as Luddites: **Nicholas Carr**, **Mark Bauerlein**, or **Sven Birkerts**. Rather it came from Maryland reporter **Michael S. Rosenwald** and *The Washington Post*. The piece is eye-catching if for no other reason than it *isn't* from the usual suspects!

What **Rosenwald** discovered is precisely what **Carr**, or **Birkerts**, or **Bauerlein**, or your faithful columnist has been saying for at least a decade: yes, online reading occurs, and many digital natives use it for a variety of reasons. But no one, including them, prefers online reading when trying to comprehend a difficult text.

It is as if **Rosenwald** is reading over **Carr** or **Bauerlein's** shoulder. The students he interviews do not like online reading because it is distracting. They find online reading difficult because when they read an online text,



90% of the time they are also doing something else: checking email, checking in at a social network, or even playing a game. **Rosenwald** opens with a young man, age 20, who simply prefers reading text because of the smell, the feel, and even the *silence* of the text: it isn't making sounds, ringing bells, or offering a rabbit hole in which to get lost, literally or figuratively. Further, online readers tend to skim, cannot fully comprehend what they are reading, and find that their minds really wander — all over the place. Some even complain that the light in their eyes rather than over their shoulders is problematic.

Some of those interviewed said they would not even attempt a difficult text in electronic form. And who can blame them? Most anyone can scan a newspaper or even take on a *Harry Potter* book. But **Tocqueville**? **Plato**? **Joyce**? It simply cannot be done. **Joyce** underscores the print versus online problem in high relief. Perhaps no other author lends himself better to the online format of hyperlink hype than **Joyce** because he requires so much elaboration. "Met him pike hoses" isn't going to resonate with many that **Joyce** is word-playing with metempsychosis. But readers find that even

*continued on page 73*

## The Best of Pharmacy in One Collection



- LEADING REFERENCES
- CASE STUDIES
- NAPLEX REVIEW

For more information contact us at [pharmacylibrary@aphanet.org](mailto:pharmacylibrary@aphanet.org)

if the library had not previously tracked major title changes, new records have to be created. Existing records also have to be upgraded to current cataloging standards, if necessary. Participants are encouraged to request an International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) from the **U.S. ISSN Center**<sup>11</sup> for each title that does not already have an ISSN.

**Granular Metadata**

CRL developed a spreadsheet template to capture granular data about completeness and condition of holdings. The spreadsheet was designed using Microsoft Excel, but any software using tables or spreadsheets would work. Each column in the spreadsheet records a single category of information (see entire list below), which helps keep the data clean for aggregation and sharing in a variety of metadata formats. The spreadsheet also minimizes the effort of recording data by requiring entry of a simple yes or no response or page numbers. This approach also helps eliminate inconsistently entered descriptive terms.

Most of the terms for condition have been taken from the Preservation & Digitization Actions: Terminology for MARC21 field 583.<sup>12</sup> Fields included in the spreadsheet are listed in the tables below and in the examples on pg.74.

Completeness metadata:	
Title and piece identification	Page specific information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Journal Title</li> <li>Additional Title (monograph titles),</li> <li>Print OCLC#</li> <li>Print ISSN</li> <li>Series</li> <li>Volume</li> <li>Issue</li> <li>Part</li> <li>Publication Date</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of Pages</li> <li>Title Pagination</li> <li>Missing Pages</li> <li>Covers, foldouts, etc.</li> <li>Scanned Front Covers</li> <li>Scanned Back Covers</li> <li>Additional Pages</li> </ul>

Condition metadata:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highlighting/Underlining</li> <li>Insect Damage</li> <li>Loose (pages, covers, bindings)</li> <li>Marginalia</li> <li>Mold Damage</li> <li>Obscured Text Block</li> <li>Rebacked</li> <li>Rehoused poorly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Repaired poorly</li> <li>Repaired soundly</li> <li>Tight Binding</li> <li>Torn</li> <li>Warped/Cockled</li> <li>Yellowed/Browning pages</li> <li>Reprint</li> <li>Binding pattern variations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Printing Errors</li> <li>Acidic Paper</li> <li>Alkaline Paper</li> <li>Brittle Paper</li> <li>Faded</li> <li>Foxed.</li> </ul>

Additional fields to capture administrative metadata are also included to help manage the projects.

**Metadata Compliance by Project CERES Participants**

During the first year, project participants were all able to provide title (bibliographic records) and completeness data. Condition metadata was requested but not required in the first phase, but some participants provided the information. Although some participants were initially intimidated by the amount of data requested, many decided as they input that it was easier than expected and had immediate benefits. One participant reported that the library’s archivist was thrilled when the print volumes were transferred to the archives with the metadata spreadsheet because no resources had ever been transferred to the archives with such detailed information. This metadata enabled the archivist to understand what was being transferred and where there might be condition issues to address. This made the process of verifying a complete transfer from library to archive much faster. Another participant found that scanning operators had made decisions about re-ordering pages in the scanned version for easier viewing of images that were meant to be seen in a horizontal layout; filling out the pagination on the metadata spreadsheet helped them catch those changes. Participants also found and recorded variances and inconsistencies with dates and enumeration of issues that were printed on the items.

Colorado State<sup>13</sup> was one participant that incorporated the metadata gathering into the quality control steps of the overall workflow.

Although filling out the gap and condition metadata was not something they had done for other digitization projects, they were able to exceed their expected preservation goals for the project by 22%. In their project proposal, they listed 100 items that would be preserved and digitized. They completed the digitization and metadata recording for 122 items within the project’s single year timeline.

**Model of Metadata Capture for Collective Print Archives**

There are many elements of the project that can be adapted to other projects. It is important in a library environment to use MARC bibliographic records because that is what OCLC’s Worldcat database and library catalogs and discovery systems use now. It is important to encourage participants to request unique ISSNs because a unique internationally recognized ID that transcends individual MARC records and possible duplicates is a key element in sharing data among databases and systems. Once the MARC record and ISSN are in place, the focus can be on recording granular metadata elements of enumeration variations, publication history, and gaps and condition in a flexible format that allows data to be easily transformed into a variety of formats for sharing. This will enable libraries to respond more quickly to system innovations of the future.

Using spreadsheets to record and manage data during the project gave participants the most flexibility and potential for accuracy with minimal training. Most library staff are familiar with using spreadsheets or tables at the level of entering data, and the format requires little training even if staff do not use tables or spreadsheets frequently. Part-time student workers often completed the metadata worksheet and did so with consistency. There are no tagging or field codes or data formatting and punctuation rules to learn (and re-learn each time the data is entered). Questions that surfaced when entering data were about inconsistencies recorded on the pieces themselves such as an incorrect enumeration or date printed on an issue. Resolutions to data problems encountered by one participant were easily shared among all participants via email. With everyone using the same spreadsheet, there were no additional software-specific data entry requirements that necessitated additional instructions tailored to the software. The spreadsheet has also helped CRL aggregate all of phase 1 participant data.

CRL is still in the process of aggregating the data for the first phase. Steps include: loading the MARC records to the CRL catalog, adding records to CRL’s digital delivery system registry, creating MARC holdings records with 583 fields for commitment, gaps, and conditions according to OCLC’s recommendations for disclosing print archive holdings, and loading the issue-level data into a database that stores the granular data at an item level. The granular metadata in the spreadsheet and existing tools enable us to do all of that.

**Conclusion**

There are many successful print archiving, shared print programs and collaborative

**Little Red Herrings**  
from page 71

such quellenforschung is also better done in print than in a myriad of distracting hyperlinks.

Of course, it isn’t that digital natives or anyone else refuse to read online. Many love the ability to define words (though they likely forget them immediately), or to do quick key

word searches. Some, though I admit to reading between the lines, also prefer being able to do searches in books they haven’t read for materials they may need for a paper. Science materials, too, tend to be online favorites.

So, what are we to make of all this? As I have written elsewhere, it’s part of the transition. In no way do I believe that this spells the end of online materials. Publishers, who

*continued on page 75*

*continued on page 74*

**Little Red Herrings**  
from page 73

in a print world, enjoyed Sardanapalian benefits, are trying to recapture those cash cows in bits and bytes but with little success. It isn't so easy, but they're discovering it is much cheaper to print an electronic book while dropping the price only marginally. Like online courses at war with classroom ones, online books are going to be cheaper and provide a greater return on investment. That ROI does not necessarily include what students are investing in, however. If eBook reading increased 200%, it would still have a way to go before it caught up with print reading if measured in terms of value received and retained.

What this means for libraries is obvious, isn't it? We still have to collect and support both for the time being, in the same way that we have for years supported microfilm and bound periodical volumes. Microform reading only caught on when there was no other choice. I would find it surprising if eBooks end up in the same dustbin. Microform-reading was never easier, better, or more convenient. Nothing about it enticed the reader. Its only attraction was a pedestrian one: it saved space while still providing access, even if a difficult one. eBooks have already shown their value in the benefits mentioned above, but also in leisure reading. None of us really like lugging suitcases of print books with us on vacation (my long-suffering wife will argue that she knows at least one person). Having the ability to take literally hundreds appeals to those of us with eyes larger than our brains.

But when it comes to scholarship that must be recalled and remembered, few of us will choose the electronic text over its printed counterpart. I believe this to be more a facility of evolution and practice rather than something inherently hard-wired in us. Unless or until we can rewire our brains — and, for better or for worse, online reading is doing that — we will read both formats, depending on the subject matter and/or reason for reading.

I haven't had time to sift through the new literacy report, so I cannot speak to how well or to what extent the issue of online reading contributes to the strength or weakness of it. If the students in the **Rosenwald** story are right, and if my own research in this subject matter is at all correct, it may well unravel many of the gains we have made in recent decades. Poor readers, especially, will have a much tougher time going forward if they must learn to read digitally first. If that continues, we will see future generations underperforming when compared with their past peers.

**PRENAX**  
an International Company

**BASCH**  
a Prenax Company

**Subscription Management Solutions for Libraries & Corporate Procurement**

- ▶ Subscription management
- ▶ E-procurement integration
- ▶ E-journal set up and activation
- ▶ E-journal URL maintenance
- ▶ Click-through access to e-content
- ▶ Cost center accounting
- ▶ Automatic claiming
- ▶ Custom and branded e-portals
- ▶ License negotiation and management
- ▶ Flexible management reporting
- ▶ Built in approval process
- ▶ Express payments to publishers
- ▶ Check in option for print titles
- ▶ Partnerships that provide usage statistics, rights management, discovery tools and single sign on.

Prenax Inc. provides subscription management solutions for procurement professionals and libraries. As a partner, we provide a single point of contact for managing electronic and paper subscriptions, professional memberships and books. We offer a true one-stop shop for all business, scientific, technical, medical, research publications and electronic content. We save you time and money and eliminate the hassle of working with multiple content suppliers.

Prenax offers the flexibility of two platforms, one for servicing libraries and one suited for serving corporate customers.

Basch Subscriptions, Inc.  
Prenax Inc.  
10 Ferry Street, Suite 429, Concord, NH 03301  
(P) 603-229-0662 (F) 603-226-9443  
www.basch.com • www.prenax.com

And so, the print versus online debate continues in its ironies, even as you read this article first in print, or, if you come to it much later online. 🍷

## Pelikan's Antidisambiguation — Editions, Tweaks, and User Preferences

Column Editor: **Michael P. Pelikan** (Penn State) <mpp10@psu.edu>

I've made comments before in this space about problems that continue to plague eBook projects that begin with out-of-copyright print sources. Optical Character Recognition (OCR) has improved hugely over the past ten or fifteen years, but achieving the last incremental improvements that would bring it close to practical perfection has proven difficult. Even if achievable, near-perfect OCR would do nothing to address the backlog we've accumulated of poor OCR'd texts, many of which, as mentioned, are out of copyright.

This means there's not a lot of financial incentive to promote investment in retrospectively repairing past results of flawed OCR projects. This came up for me again recently whilst reading, for only the second time in my life, the *Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant*.

My first encounter with this material was through Project Gutenberg. It came in the form of a pure ASCII text file. It had line endings and carriage returns, but nothing more exotic than that. The file itself was not the product of OCR. Instead, it was typed by true enthusiasts: candidates for sainthood who felt strongly enough about a particular book to take on the task of transcribing as an entire work from printed page into keystrokes, for the good of the World.

The quality of transcription of many such works was variable, but improved over time. This was not in small measure because other folks came along and began to make corrections to the hand-built editions, in a way somewhat similar to how a wiki article can be improved over time. Better, in some ways, because there were fewer matters relying upon

subjective interpretation, at least in the case of same-language transcriptions — either it was correct or not.

I don't really understand, if a human-generated, even curated, transcription exists, why the builders and publishers of e-texts don't take advantage of them. Why start from scratch and apply machine-driven OCR to printed text if there's already a transcription? Many, perhaps most, such transcriptions are freely available and could be used — it would cost only attribution and recognition of the source, something I'd perhaps wrongly assume that even the most craven, financially motivated republishers of old works could bring themselves to do.

Instead, now, a dozen or more years after admiring the transcription of **General Grant's** memoirs, and hoisting a coffee cup in toast to

*continued on page 77*