Charleston Conference 2016--Issues in Book and Serial Acquisition

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@Brunning: People & Technology

At the Only Edge that Means Anything / How We Understand What We Do

by Dennis Brunning (Director, The Design School Library, Arizona State University) <dennis.brunning@gmail.com>

Annals of Organizational Advice — The Moment You Can’t Ignore: Why Big Trouble Leads to a Great Future

Richard at the beginning, authors Dornfeld and O’Connor give us a blow-by-blow account of an operating room accident or battle – it all depends on what you know. A celebrated and senior GE surgeon is closing up a patient after a 7-hour emergency resection of a perforated colon. This is a life and death moment and it’s a day at the office most of us don’t experience. As the scrub technician does inventory, he counts fewer surgical sponges out than went in. He challenges the surgeon who proceeds with the stapling procedure — closing up. It’s everyone’s responsibility to heal the patient but it’s the scrub’s job to count instruments and everything that goes into or out of the patient. The scrub told the surgeon a sponge was missing.

The next thing anyone remembers is a sailing surgical stapler. An OR out of control.

The authors are consultants and ethnographers. And fairly courageous to step into the big trouble of a dysfunctional surgery unit at a major hospital. The situation, the environment, the players — are all high stakes, high risk, high stress, high talent and skills.

Barry Dornfeld and Mel O’Connor work for CFAR — the Center for Applied Research — a research company that started up at the Wharton School of Finance at the University of Pennsylvania. The school known more for its finance MBAs (Republican presidential candidate, Donald Trump, is a graduate), it startles to read about CFAR’s approach to organizational guidance. Dornfeld filmed a documentary on Kinnear musicians in Philadelphia. O’Connor is a folklorist. How did they wander into a world of business management?

I urge readers to take a spin through it. The book is easy to read, doesn’t distract with charts, lists, bullet points that slog through this genre — the consultant self-help book. Dornfeld and O’Connor approach organizational communication and dynamics in a way that may reawaken the social scientist in many of us, long somnambulant in our Ranganathan incarnation as library “scientists.”

Dornfeld and O’Connor urge their clients to understand an unignorable moment as a cultural issue. This moment is easy to understand because you feel it. Think of it as the organizational “aha” moment of falling in or out of love. Or to realize you’ve got to go to the dentist or take the car keys from an elderly parent. You just know things are going right or wrong and whatever follows must align with this realization.