Pelikan's Antidisambiguation--"Horses for Courses"

Michael P. Pelikan
Penn State, mpp10@psu.edu

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Pelikan’s Antidisambiguation — “Horses for Courses”

“How many of those do you have?”

She was asking about the various tablet and pad-like devices stacked around the arms of my leather recliner. I did my best to appear to welcome the question. “Well, it depends,” I said, “on what I need to do at any given time.”

“This one’s my main at-home reading device,” I explained, holding up the Kindle Fire HDX 8.9. I held up the Kindle Voyage. “And this one’s for reading when I’m away from home.”

“What about that one?” she asked. “That’s my Android tablet,” I said, showing the Nexus 7, “It’s on cellular as well as wi-fi. And this one,” holding up the Samsung, “is my phone.”

“So four,” she said.

“Well, unless you include the Microsoft Surface, which is mine, or the Latitude work-laptop with the touch screen, which is the university’s,” I pointed out.

“So six?” she asked. “Sure,” I confessed, “but that’s not that many, really. I mean, how many brushes do you use for your paintings?”

“It’s the same thing,” she said, “I need those!”

So this is why she’s called an artist and I’m called a geek.

No one would really argue that an artist ought to be restricted to carrying a single brush, or that a photographer ought to be restricted to carrying a single lens — unless, that is, by choice. I might think it odd if the folks next to me at the opera hoisted up a pair of Oberwerk 25x100s, and it would certainly invite comment if, at the star party, you confined your observations to those you could make with your opera glasses. And yet to carry multiple digital devices seems to give those around you a license to comment on, of all things, your perceived eccentricity.

Our eldest son is a Design major. He’s recently been talking to us about his Typography class. They’ve been exploring historical typography, typographic analysis, and typographic design. He’s loving it, and, with only the slightest prompting, is happy to demonstrate the gulf between what most people, even fairly literate people, know about type, and those who study it formally, with an eye toward becoming practitioners of type.

So recently I forwarded a couple of URLs to him. The first was toward an article (there are many) about Bookerly, Apple’s new
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In work pre-dating Bell, he devised a mechanism to produce a visual representation of sound waves. The wizards associated with firstsounds.org, David Giovannoni, Patrick Feaster, Richard Martin, and Meagan Hennessy, figured out a way to take surviving artifacts produced in those early experiments, recover the waveforms stored in them, and render them as sound, making it possible to hear what may very well be the earliest existing examples of recordings of the human voice.

Included at the end of one of the clips is what appears to be a spoken epithet, produced in disgust at the end of what might be history’s first botched take, captured for all eternity. Universal, indeed.

There are similar examples in other areas, durable practices that have survived the evolution of their host technology’s evolution over time. The act of sitting for a portrait, is unchanged in many respects, from paint to still photography, except, perhaps, for the welcome departure of the head clamps that were employed in early photographic portraiture owing to the slow emulsions and long exposure times of that era. Another universal quality is that of directionality: most things have a front end or front side, they “point” in a particular direction and orient themselves in that direction as they move. Most conveyance requires at least one party to be “watching where they’re going,” indeed, we pay the driver to do that — it’s a selling point, “Leave the driving to us!”

Consider the editing process connected with the published word. Somebody, usually one who demonstrates an aptitude, if not an eagerness, reads the text for errors. This protects the end-reader from having to be the first one ever to have read the thing (although I’ve spoken with many professors who feel they’ve frequently been the first even to glance at the “finished” works they receive).

And here we arrive at one of the promises of e-text, long potential, and now made actual. If you have a Kindle, have you ever noticed the appearance in your “library” of a work you know to have been part of the library for some time, yet here, displayed as recent, even bearing the label, “New”? What’s that about?

Well, in looking into the Bookerly release, one of the things you find is that along with the typeface, Amazon has also introduced a new page layout engine to render it. The new page layout engine comes as a software update. Among other things, it has done away with the old engine’s obsession with achieving full line justification by inserting spaces between words to pad out the length of a line. The result often just looked weird, and was a matter of annoyance and complaint among those who notice and comment on such things. Ah, but to take full advantage of the new page rendering algorithms, it has been necessary to re-encode the e-texts, presumably adding tags needed to direct the enhanced rendering process. This means that works in your “library” that have

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laboration, particularly across departments. One idea is setting material funds aside for new faculty in addition to their usual departmental funds.

It was interesting to hear about collaborations between librarians and vendors reaching out to faculty and students, however, the sales pitch information detracted from what I think we could have learned in this session.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2015
AFTERNOON NEAPOLITAN SESSIONS

Innovations in Open Access Monographs, Archives and Journals — Presented by Rick Anderson (University of Utah); Brian Hole (Ubiquity Press); David Parker (Alexander Street); Alison Mudditt (University of California Press); Jack Montgomery (Facilitator, Western Kentucky University)

Reported by: Crystal Hampson (University of Saskatchewan) <crystal.hampson@usask.ca>

Mudditt opened this inspiring session on alternative models of OA publishing by describing the context for monographs publishing where the transition to open access is happening at the same time as the transition to digital Open access fits UC Press’ mission to democratize content and disseminate scholarship. However, OA models for STM journals (disciplines with large research grants) do not fit the humanities reality. Mudditt described UC Press’ Lumino model for OA book publishing. Contributions are made from the author’s institution, a subsidy from its library, a subsidy from UC Press and revenue from print sales. Authors want to be read, not just published.

UC Press hopes to demonstrate that OA can be better than traditional monographs. Hole described the Open Library of Humanities platform, a very cost efficient platform supported as a charitable organization, publishing without article processing charges for authors. OLH hopes to create a global community of humanities publishing. Publishing can be cheaper. Parker described archival OA publishing using two models: government or institution funded, and the sales threshold model which has delayed OA. An example is Anthropology Commons, which has delayed OA, 10% of sales contributed to sponsor future OA publishing, and underwriting by some contributors.

Shared Print in the Orbis Cascade Alliance and Colorado Alliance — Presented by Charles Watkinson (Facilitator, University of Michigan); Xan Arch (Reed College); James Bunnelle (Lewis & Clark College); Jill Emery (Portland State University); Yem Fong (University of Colorado Boulder Libraries); Michael Levine-Clark (University of Denver); George Machovec (Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries)

Report by: Alison M. Armstrong (Radford University) <amarmstro@radford.edu>

The Orbis Cascade Alliance presenters were Arch, Bunnelle, and Emery. Their top priorities are cooperative collection development, pooling resources, and space reclamation. There was a collective purchase of 1,000 volumes of 19th Century British Parliamentary Papers they wanted to weed. Several lessons were learned: print documentation is never complete and always have an exit strategy. They made a joint purchase of the e-version. The next step is to decide who, if any of them, will keep the print.

The Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries presenters were Fong, Levine-Clark, and Machovec. The impetus for their shared print program was based on space, a strong ILL system, eBooks, and storage facilities. They have designated copies to hold and others to weed to protect last copies. Their comparison tool, Gold Rush, can use real time data to compare library to library or system to system. It can also be used for new programs for list checking and gap filling and to support requests for additional funds.

PASCAL is high-density offsite storage. The materials that are there are there to stay and have been identified as last copies.

The session was informative, engaging, and well attended.

Text & Data Mining Contracts – The Issues & The Needs — Presented by: Meg White (Facilitator, Rittenhouse Book Distributors); Nancy Herther (Moderator, University of Minnesota); Alicia Wise (Elsevier); Daniel Dollar (Yale University Library); Darby Orcutt (North Carolina State University Libraries)

Reported by: Ramune K. Kubilius (Northwestern University, Galter Health Sciences Library) <r-kubilius@northwestern.edu>

Reference was made to an Elsevier video, “What is Text Mining?,” (bit.ly/1R18C1U), and the LIBER text and mining Website (http://liber.eu/en/text-data-mining). Dollar jump-started the presentation with a reminder that the purpose of scholarship is to understand a large corpus of information and that challenges include legal (licensing), pricing, and access issues. The inability to mine is a type of embargo (restriction) on using content. Library support is needed especially for the humanities (more than STM). Digital Humanities Centers can bridge gaps on making raw data interoperable for humanists. Per Wise, libraries and publishers work together to support researchers. She highlighted Elsevier’s aims to provide services beyond content (e.g., its SDM development portal) and a timeline in this arena since 2006. Researcher challenges abound in differing support requirements by discipline and expertise (early adopters needed to write their own code, legal (e.g., user privacy), and financial. Orcutt mentioned his institution’s mining colloquium and mentioned vendor and library push me/pull me challenges and misunderstandings on capacities, siloed content, librarians’ expectations (a lot at no additional cost) vs vendors’ thinking (that everyone needs customized service). “Mining” implies new support and new roles. The first step is to advocate for basic access (BAM-the Basic Access Model). Questions to panelists abounded and responses highlighted the spectrum of users and their needs: those who just need the data, those with an interest in getting into mining, and those who need hands-on holding. One (idealistic?) hope expressed: vendors should consider price at scale with support for users at all levels (i.e., high-end researchers don’t need dumbed down systems for mining). ☀

That’s all the reports we have room for in this issue. Watch for more reports from the 2015 Charleston Conference in upcoming issues of Against the Grain. Presentation material (PowerPoint slides, handouts) and taped session links from many of the 2015 sessions are available online. Visit the Conference Website at www.charlestonlibraryconference.com. — KS

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required it, if high enough on some list, have been updated, have received the new encoding, and have been re-downloaded, and hence the “New” label. The notion of updates and soft editions like this has been lauded in the past as a quality with potential, made possible in an e-text environment. It’s nice to see examples of such improvements appearing not just in somebody’s imagination, but in the wild.

So, “Horses for courses!” It’s alright to have different devices for different applications. It’s just like different pens, or lenses, or brushes, for different settings. And hooray for settings, enabling us to go ahead and set the typeface we’d like to render a particular work in. And three cheers for the drive to improve, to refine a product, to bring it closer to the ideal that inspired its first expression, to be focused upon making the next take the best take, the keeper. ☀