

2013

Notes from Langlois--Prelude to Thoughts on Sustainability

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Recommended Citation

Smith, Scott Alan (2013) "Notes from Langlois--Prelude to Thoughts on Sustainability," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 25: Iss. 6, Article 35.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.7430>

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Bet You Missed It

Press Clippings — In the News — Carefully Selected by Your Crack Staff of News Sleuths

Column Editor: **Bruce Strauch** (The Citadel)

Editor's Note: Hey, are y'all reading this? If you know of an article that should be called to *Against the Grain's* attention ... send an email to <kstrauch@comcast.net>. We're listening! — **KS**

GOODY. LET'S READ ABOUT SEXUAL OBSESSION

by **Bruce Strauch** (The Citadel)

(1) **Henry Miller**, *Quiet Days in Clichy* (1956); (2) **Junichiro Tanizaki**, *Naomi* (1947) (Roaring Twenties moga or modern girl humiliating her benefactor); (3) **Louis Couperus**, *The Hidden Force* (1900) (Dutch colonial official in eroticized Indonesia); (4) **Bohumil Hrabal**, *Close Watched Trains* (1964); (5) **Pierre Choderlos de Laclos**, *Dangerous Liaisons* (1782) (the earliest exploration of whether sexual pleasure and emotion can be separated) (If you're wondering, it can't.).

See — **Ian Buruma**, "Five Best," *The Wall Street Journal*, Oct. 12-13, 2013, p.C10.

NOW FOR SOME VICTORIAN GORE

by **Bruce Strauch** (The Citadel)

Pull up to the fire for some good Victorian crime reads: (1) **Thomas De Quincey**, *On Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts* (1827); (2) **V.A.C. Gatrell**, *The Hanging Tree* (1994) (a thorough study of execution in England); (3) **Ruth Richardson**, *Death, Dissection, and the Destitute* (1987) (nothing like a good grave robbing); (4) **Wilkie Collins**, *Armada* (1864-65) (fiendishly clever but forgotten Collins); (5) **Andrew Forrester**, *The Female Detective* (c. 1864) (the second female detective in lit history).

See — **Judith Flanders**, "Five Best," *The Wall Street Journal*, Oct. 26-27, 2013, p.C10. **Judith** is the author of *The Invention of Murder: How the Victorians Reveled in Death and Detection and Created Modern Crime*.



THE MASTER MUSES

by **Bruce Strauch** (The Citadel)

The great **Tom Wolfe** is interviewed. He wanted to be a writer from age five even though he couldn't read. But he saw his father publish an agricultural journal, *The Southern Planter*.

"I would see him writing on a big yellow legal pad. And then about two weeks later there would come out a publication in type. I don't know if I can explain it, but when I was young, type was so refined. It had these sharp edges. I wish I could relive the excitement of seeing type for the first time."

He also notes the old saw "write about what you know" is "brilliant advice for your first novel, but it makes you helpless on your second." **Tom** didn't write *Bonfire of the Vanities* until he was 54, and he knew nothing of the subject matter. He had to dig it all up using his skills as a reporter.

See — **George Neumayr**, "The Bizarre and the Jeune," *The American Spectator*, Jan/Feb, 2014, p.10.

HOODS, DIRTBAGS & STUMBLEBUMS

by **Bruce Strauch** (The Citadel)

Let's read about human detritus. (1) **S.E. Hinton**, *The Outsiders* (1967) (switchblades and hot cars); (2) **Saul Bellow**, *The Adventures of Augie March* (1953) (slum rats of the Depression); (3) **Christopher Isherwood**, *Berlin Stories* (1945) (Who knew? **Capote** ripped off one of these stories for "Breakfast at Tiffany's"); (4) **Herbert Asbury**, *Gangs of New York* (1928) (from Dead Rabbits and River Dusters to union goons); (5) **Bill Buford**, *Among the Thugs* (1990) (American tourist falls among British soccer hooligans wrecking an Italian town).

See — **Rich Cohen**, "Five Best," *The Wall Street Journal*, Dec. 7-8, 2013, p.C10.

Notes from Langlois — Prelude to Thoughts on Sustainability

Column Editor: **Scott Alan Smith** (Langlois Public Library, Langlois, Oregon; Phone: 541-348-2066) <scott.alan.smith@langloislibrary.net>

Well, gentle readers, it's been a little over a year since I assumed my duties as library director of the **Langlois Public Library**. Leading a small rural public library has proven in many ways to be very rewarding. There have been some surprises. I have learned a great deal.

Some aspects of the job have proven, not surprisingly, to be very familiar. My nearly thirty years as a book dealer prepared me well to handle selection, acquisitions, collection development, and vendor relations. I have enjoyed this work, and it has been very

gratifying to see my choices in the hands of readers.

Indeed, one of the most rewarding experiences of this appointment has been the opportunity to get to know and to interact with patrons. I know many of them by name, and I've learned their readings and viewing tastes (we check out a lot of DVDs as well as books). Although it has perhaps receded into the dim corners of archaic library practice, readers' advisory is still very much alive here.

Public access computers get a great deal of use, as does wi-fi. Helping people find the

information they seek is fundamental to effective customer service, and again vendor experience is invaluable training for such a role.

Programming is a central function of the job. We have monthly programs that include a book club, language classes, a movie night, favorite readings, and presentations that focus on local and regional culture and history. We also work closely with the **Port Orford Public Library** (Port Orford is only thirteen miles

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Take a closer look at....

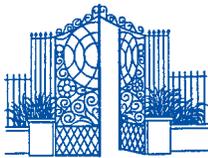
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eBook Platforms for Academic ... *from page 1*

of the authors work in academic libraries, and their job responsibilities include developing, procuring, promoting, and educating users about eBooks. The topics covered include an overview of eBook platforms including technical aspects and business models, lending platforms, aggregator platforms, commercial publisher platforms, and university press platforms. It is our hope that when you read these articles it will add to your knowledge base about the current and future state of eBook platforms in academic libraries. 🌱

Rumors *from page 6*

eye because **Mary Graham**, vice president of South Carolina's **Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce**, was quoted. Is this "the wave of the future?" I certainly hope not. We are looking forward to our interview with **Mary** which is in the works.

<http://www.against-the-grain.com/2014/01/caught-my-eye-1614/>

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Notes from Langlois *from page 8*

south of us, which in this remote part of the state is nothing) to support children's programs, writing workshops, and other activities. These programs require planning, publicity, and engagement with the community. In this I am indeed lucky to have as a counterpart **Tobe Porter**, Director of the **Port Orford Public Library**. **Tobe** is an institution in north Curry County — indeed, she built the **Langlois Public Library** before moving to Port Orford. Her depth of knowledge and prestige in the area has been invaluable to me.

Many programs and fundraising efforts are made possible or supported by the Friends of the **Langlois Public Library**. The library has a loyal and strong Friends group; **Jo Rieber**, the President of the Friends, has been a cheerful and tireless advocate for the library.

Facilities management is another area of concern. Although this stretch of coast is known as Oregon's banana belt — it seldom gets very cold, or for that matter oppressively hot — the combination of marine air, powerful wind, and heavy rain (think of **Ken Kesey's** *Sometimes A Great Notion*) take their toll. Building maintenance is essential. Planning also comes into play here. One of the projects I inherited was that of looking into a possible building expansion. A committee considered the issue and ultimately recommended not pursuing this for at least a year, and the board accepted the recommendation. I'll address the reasons why in a bit.

Training, staff development, and volunteer coordination are all part of the job, and once again vendor experience speaks to some of this — training and staff development are just as vital to vendors. Recruiting enthusiastic volunteers is something new, though, but enjoyable and very necessary. Volunteers are essential for small library operations. The Friends of the Library also funded two summer internships for local students; in addition to working in the library we were able to tour **Ingram's** Roseburg distribution center, and take a field trip to the **University of Oregon's Knight Library**.

Fundraising and grant writing are also vital aspects of managing a library, especially a small one. There are local, regional, state, and national grant makers who have supported projects for our library. One project this past year, funded by the **Curry County Cultural Coalition**, was the digitization of several issues of a late nineteenth-century newspaper published about five miles south of Langlois in the now nearly vanished community of Denmark. The work of digitization was performed by the Oregon Digital Newspaper Program at the **University of Oregon**. I am grateful to **Sheila Rabun**, Project Coordinator, for her help in bringing this project to a smooth and effective conclusion.

Far less familiar is the administrative structure of such libraries. The Langlois Public Library District is, under Oregon law, a special district. Oregon has roughly 900 of them, including library districts, water districts, cemetery districts, ditching and draining districts, fire districts, and so on. We are

advised and aided by an agency of state government, the **Special Districts Association of Oregon**. As the district's chief executive I report to a five-member board of directors, who are publicly elected officials. Strict guidelines and state statutes addressing public meeting law, elections, budget procedures, OSHA compliance, procurement, and much more define our structure and operations.

When I started here, two old friends who have served as public library directors in Alaska for several years told me that one critical key to success is a good working relationship with one's board. I am fortunate to have a board that consists of people genuinely committed to the library's ongoing relevance and excellence, and who endeavor to understand as much as possible about the library world.

The greatest challenge facing this library — indeed so many libraries — is that of sustainability. Property taxes are the primary source of revenue for the district. Although augmented by donations, grants, and fundraising efforts on the part of the Friends, the principal financial foundation of the district is one that is not increasing, while costs continue to rise. The aforementioned library expansion was not pursued because we felt the cost of operating a larger facility would be too great, without offering commensurate benefits.

There are a number of options we can — indeed, must — consider moving forward to ensure our small community can still enjoy the benefits of library services. This will be the topic of my next column. 🌱