April 1993

For Your Information/ The Echo Effect

Editor
Off the Wall

From Your Editor

Madness, She Wrote

I have a confession to make. It concerns Herman Pabbruwe of Kluwer Academic.

After the 1992 Charleston Conference, Herman the magnificent sent me some gorgeous Holland-type flower bulbs. They came in a huge dramatic-looking box all the way from Holland. It said so on the side. Genuine Dutch tulips from Holland. I was awed.

I opened the box and inside were a capacious variety of bulbs plus a container to plant them in. Now I have to tell you that I am not a Heather-Miller-level planting type. I am a brown thumb. Anything I touch dies — at least things of the flora kingdom. I have two children and a husband, all living.

So — I took these bulbs and closeted them in my refrigerator. I admit I was scared. Suppose they died. They were a Netherlands-engineered fool-proof system of yard ornamentation, but I would doubtless kill them. To my Greek soul, this was a bad omen not only for me but for the Charleston Conference. I had a lot of ancestors in the Delphi divining business and know of what I speak.

So, I’ll reiterate. I stashed the bulbs in my fridge in their nice brown bag container and started asking local folks for bulb planting advice. My a-lot-more horticulturist-than-I am English neighbor with her sickeningly beautiful rose garden told me to put a hole in the bag so the bulbs could breathe. That was a start. But the bulbs were still inside the fridge and I felt certain that soil, water and sunlight were necessary. The light in the fridge only comes on when you open the door. Even Bishop Berkeley knew that. No open door, no light.

Now mind you, there were instructions with the bulbs in every language known to woman, and just by chance I knew one of the languages. I read the instructions. But — I was still confused given that I can read but not in horticulturalese. So the bulbs sat in my refrigerator.

All my advisors (including the county agri. agent) told me to wait until the weather got colder to plant them. There was no precise calendar date. Just “when it gets cold.” And it was a record mild winter. Plus my weather report consists of my husband’s muttered remarks when he returns indoors each morning with the newspaper before he settles down to curse the nation’s political leaders.

The clock was ticking on my Greek superstitiousness. In the meantime, I tried to send Herman an e-mail message and was unsuccessful in thanking him. He was off doing big deals in a newly unified Europe. I saw this as another bad omen not just for the American serials market but for the Chas. Conf. and my lawn.

My husband was no help. He believes in Armageddon, cataclysms and a return of the ice age. He was reading a doom-soaked book designed to terrify geriatrics in St. Petersburg.

continued on page 56

For Your Information

The Inside Story Behind “The Echo Effect”

The Echo Effect
(from the Glossary of The Book Marketing Handbook)

The “spillover” or indirect sales effect from a publisher’s direct mail (or space) advertising campaign. Various studies have shown that in addition to the keyed or directly traceable returns, publisher’s direct mail promotions produce indirect and untraceable sales, called echo.

The lead article in the Spring 1993 issue of the AAP’s Professional & Scholarly Publishing Division Bulletin, penned by Mark Sexton, describes how the AAP and the American Booksellers Association are providing joint funding for research into “the echo effect.”

Just what is “the echo effect,” and how did the term come into being? “The echo effect” is the sales effect that publisher promotion produces in bookstores and other publisher sales beyond measurable direct response. For example, a publisher mailing to various lists for a particular book might produce 150 direct, traceable orders. Yet, the indirect response from that same promotional effort — immeasurable — could be as many as 500 orders or more.

Publishers have always sensed that there was a sales spillover from their advertising and promotional efforts, and in the 1960s and 1970s there were tests done by a couple of presses, among them Wiley and MIT Press, to trace and measure this unnamed indirect sales effect.

But the term itself, “the echo effect,” did not materialize as a concrete factor in publisher promotion until it appeared for the first time in print in the now classic Book Marketing Handbook: Tips and Techniques for the Sale and Promotion of Scientific, Technical, Professional and Scholarly Books and Journals (Bowker, 1980).

In The Handbook, Nat Bodian identified, described, and defined “the echo effect,” and provided several case studies of how it worked and the results obtained. “The echo effect” became part of the “Vocabulary of Publishing and Promotion” when a clear definition appeared for the first time in the Handbook’s Glossary.

With the appearance of Book Marketing Handbook, marketing professionals in the publishing industry realized that in “the echo effect,” they had a viable vehicle for not only proving the value of their promotional efforts, but also as leverage for increasing promotional budgets.

Marketers began talking up “echo” among themselves and at such meetings as The Professional Publisher’s Marketing Group, and initiated their own independent echo studies.

By 1982, some 18 months after the

continued on page 53

April 1993 / Against the Grain
Lowe at the Philadelphia office, 215-386-0100, extension 1410, or Robert Kimberley in Uxbridge, England at +44-895-270016 or write to the Chemical Information Division, ISI, 3501 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104.

Dialogue, the Business of Publishing Yankee Book Peddler's newsletter is out for Winter 1993. The Fabulous Helmut Schwarz, Director of Publisher Relations at Yankee and editor of Dialogue has once again turned out a very useful issue. Featured is the annual roundup of publisher title output: 1992 vs. 1991.

What were you doing during the Blizzard of '93? Phi Greene (EBSCO) had planned a surprise party for 60 people (it was his wife's birthday) who were stranded in various parts of the globe. Richard Jasper (Emory) thought the eight or so inches of snow that they got were pretty but alarming. And he had to deal with a 60-foot pine tree bashing his kids' wooden picnic table. In Charleston, kids who had never seen snow spent time in the 80 mile an hour wind chasing snowflakes that never stuck. Meanwhile, up in Cranford, NJ, Nat Bodian decided to turn the day into something worthwhile, so he wrote us a few articles on his manual typewriter. See page 23.

Post-Blizzard, the Strauch family took an excursion up North to visit our son who is a plebe at West Point. His mother thinks he is incredibly handsome and grown-up. While up there in the intellectual heartland (I swear there is a famous college or university ten miles as you slide into New England) we got to visit with the dynamic Betty Oktar at Vassar. The campus under fresh snowfall was as charming as I had imagined and the library which looks like a gothic cathedral is drop-dead-awesomely beautiful. Betty's shelves were loaded with fascinating old gift books. One series taught my eye - Three Vassar Girls at Home, TVG in England, TVG Abroad, TVG in Italy, TVG in South America and on and on. The three girls were Vassar students and the books are fiction but have much truth in them. - "Vassar is not the name of an Indian tribe but of an institution of learning in the United States," one of the girls was quoted as saying. Touring the library (the proverbial busman's holiday) we met Vassar personnel - Head of the brimming art library, Tom Hill - Nancy MacKechnie, curator of rare books and manuscripts who uncovered their Audubon double elephant folios especially for us - Cindy Duval in interlibrary loan - Shirley Maul, head of readers services - Mary Lou Jeanneney who writes and directs publications for the library - Sabrina Pape the associate director stuck her head in to say hello - Chuck Henry, the library director, wasn't there as he is spending a lot of his time fund raising. Betty has a multi-talented acquisitions staff, at least one of whom raises pigs and makes a blend of maple syrup. Betty's dashing husband Sevgin took us up in his airplane for a tour of the Hudson valley and then we dined at the amazing Culinary Institute of America near Poughkeepsie. It's in a retired Jesuit monastery and the decor and food were flabbergastingly fabulous. Thank you Betty and Sevgin for a marvelous time. For an interview with Betty and a look at her staff, see this issue, page 14.

I also spent some time with the vivacious Georgiana Watson at West Point. She raises horses and runs a terrific library.

The amazing Lyman Newlin is thriving despite fires and storms. He has just moved into his new/repaired house. And while for the interview with Lyman done by Karen Schmidt in an upcoming summer issue of American Libraries. Can you imagine Lyman captured on paper?

Mike Markwith has been on the road again! He recently returned from Phoenix, California, Portland and Seattle. Check out some of his meanderings in On the Road, this issue, page 11.

Heard from Emery Koltay of ISBN fame the other day. What a charming man. And he is loaded with new ideas. One of his current interests is the enhancement of the Books in Print database with table of contents data especially for STM titles. Watch for our interview with Mr. Koltay in an upcoming issue of ATG.

On April 1, R.R. Bowker launched a new system of data acquisition, validation and delivery called BookPower and will begin transforming its database from repositories of information into dynamic, intelligent, information networks. Books in Print wil be the first database to be converted and will not only be able to communicate directly with other databases, but will scan, scrutinize, and correct its own records. Over the spring and summer of 1993 Books in Print Managing Director Albert Simmonds and John Roney, Director, Editorial Systems, will alter and enhance Bowker's traditional methods of communication, classification and output. For further information, contact Joan Sliensh (908) 655-2818.

As previously announced the wonderful Timothy R. Turner has taken the even more wonderful Judy Luther's responsibilities for the south territories for Faxon. His address is 3232 Cobb Parkway, Suite 208, Atlanta GA 30339. Phone: (404)955-3396. FAX: (404) 955-3295. Internet: Turner@faxon.com.

Gary Ross, whose new little baby girl is just beginning to sleep through the night, is soon to be leaving the Univ. of South Carolina. He is going to work for Information Access Company as Distribution Systems Manager later this month. It's a new position responsible for managing the effective distribution of all IAC data products.

Congratulations. Gary. And sleep tight.

Hey, isn't that enough, already?

For Your Information continued from page 49

appearance of Book Marketing Handbook, Gordon Graham, the Chairman and Chief Executive of Butterworth Publishers in England was writing about "The Echo Effect" in the British weekly book trade journal The Bookseller. In Graham's article, he wrote, "Any marketing director or sales manager or promotion manager who does not know what the echo effect is has not read Nat G. Bodian's Book Marketing Handbook and should buy a copy." Graham's article goes on to say "British and continental booksellers will favour the echo effect when they learn they are it."

In 1983, with the appearance of the second volume of Book Marketing Handbook, a number of case studies of the "echo effect" by various publishers drew additional attention and prompted an article on the subject in Publishers Weekly.

"The echo effect" was given much additional exposure in the mid-1980s through talks by the author of Book Marketing Handbook before numerous American and international publishing groups and in lectures before publishing and marketing classes at five universities.

Having now become a fact of life in the marketing of books, and particularly of professional and scholarly books, "the echo effect," will in 1993 for the first time be taken seriously by the AAP and ABA, each of which has budgeted funds for a joint study of its beneficial sales effect, to be undertaken later in 1993.