Bet You Missed It

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Bet You Missed It

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

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A Data Service That Could Revolutionize Publishing by Joan Loslo (U. of Northern Iowa)

A bar code-based system for providing comprehensive sales data to publishers is threatening to change the industry, just as a similar system has done for record companies. Although the cost of the system is keeping some publishers and mass market retailers from signing on, the data-gathering service feels they will come around in time. Highly accurate sales figures will undoubtedly have an effect on bestseller lists, which will in turn have an effect on book sales. On the other hand, more accurate sales figures would also help publishers to manage more effectively. See — Turner, Richard, "Of Books and Bar Codes," Newsweek, v.130(21), November 24, 1997, p.75.

Confidentially Speaking by Pamela Rose (SUNY at Buffalo)

A new series of guidelines to protect the confidentiality of electronic and paper medical information has upset civil liberties groups which feel the proposal makes too many exemptions to its strict standard of privacy to aid law enforcement. Biomedical organizations have offered no major objections yet, but drug companies do have some concerns. Donna Shalala specifically recommends criminal penalties for anyone (including researchers who improperly discloses information, although health records could still be used for tracking infectious diseases and to extract pure data with proper accountability. See — Kaiser, Jocelyn, "Privacy Rules Set New Research Curbs," Science, v.277 (September 19, 1997), p.1757.

One-on-One With Sendak by Twyla Racz (Eastern Michigan University)

Based on a series of meetings with Maurice Sendak, the author of this article discusses Sendak's writing, illustrating, and philosophy. Sendak's stories confront the real fears of children. His illustrations are often based on his own childhood and relatives and reflect the influence of William Blake. However, Sendak does not consider himself to be a writer only for children. He has also branched out to designing sets for operas. He is currently reading all of Shakespeare and Keats, expecting a picture book to evolve from the experience. See — Bashanes, Nicholas, "Call of the Wild," Civilization, v.46(6) (December 1997/January 1998), p.52, 57.

Clinical Trial Registry by Pamela Rose (SUNY at Buffalo)

Inconclusive or negative clinical trials, which researchers tend not to publish, may affect the validity of systematic reviews. Editors of one hundred journals around the world propose a novel method of dealing with the problem of unpublished clinical trials. An "amnesty" proposal to be discussed at the International Conference on Biomedical Peer Review in Prague, Czech Republic, may encourage researchers to post completed but unpublished trials on a registry on the Web, allowing other researchers to track them down for possible inclusion in the literature reviews. This sign of increasing activism to improve reportage standards is admirable, but more tangible benefits must be offered to encourage the practice. See — Taubes, Gary, "A Plan to Register Unpublished Studies," Science, v.277 (September 19, 1997), p.1754.

Math Problems by Pamela Rose (SUNY at Buffalo)

Since the issuance of the 1989 guidelines by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) and of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) benchmarks for science, mathematics, and technology education in 1983, thousands of schools in the U.S. have moved to implement the established standards by training teachers and incorporating mathematics into virtually every subject. A continued push is coming from the Clinton Administration's goal to make U.S. students first in the world of mathematics and science by the year 2000. Yet despite the fervor, the effort to implement mathematics and science standards has been slow and frustrating. Although scores on some tests have improved, significant gains in student achievement have remained elusive. Teachers who have little training in mathematics and science, publishers reluctant to make real changes in their textbooks, and continued emphasis on tests that measure proficiency only with basic facts have all hindered progress. In addition, a debate is brewing over the level at which learning should be controlled and over the perceived incursion of national standards into local control. Meanwhile, as educators struggle to implement the 1989 standards, NCTM is working to revise their guidelines for the year 2000, soliciting input via its Web site (www.nctm.org). See — Vogel, Gretchen, "The Calculus of School Reform," Science, v.277 (August 29, 1997), p.1192-1195.

Hold That Tiger! by Pamela Rose (SUNY at Buffalo)

The merger of Reed Elsevier and Wolters Kluwer to form the world's largest publisher of trade and academic journals has spurred Dutch libraries to band together in an effort to try to hold down future price increases for scientific journals. A set of "licensing principles" will govern future negotiations with publishers over electronic journal subscription prices. Other European libraries are expected to join the effort. See — Enserink, Martin, "Libraries Journal Forces on Journal Prices," Science, v.278 (November 28, 1997), p.1558.
The Comic Element
by Twyla Racz (Eastern Michigan University)

The Library of Congress contains a collection of comic books. Originally, comics were black and white, but with the founding in 1938 of DC Comics, which began to publish comics commercially and in color, a “golden age” began. By 1941 over 160 comic book titles were published each month. In 1954 publication of “Seductions of the Innocent” led to the linking of comics with Juvenile Delinquency and subsequently to the establishment of the Comics Code Authority. See — Drabelle, Dennis, “Weird Fantasies and Amazing Adventures,” Civilization, v.46(6), December 1997/January 1998, p.66-75.

Journals at Trial
by Pamela Rose (SUNY at Buffalo)

Gordon and Breach (B&B) will appeal a decision that upheld the reliability of a study published in 1988, ranking the cost-effectiveness of some 250 physics journals. Using standards such as the number of characters per issue and citation rates, the study concluded that journals published by the American Physical Society (APS) and by the American Institute of Physics were more cost-effective than those published by B&B. The latest ruling says that APS and AIP did not falsely advertise when they planned to send the study to librarians. See — Kaiser, Jocelyn, “Physics Journals Cost Study Ruled Fair,” Science, v.277 (September 12, 1997), p.1611.

Taken for Granted
by Pamela Rose (SUNY at Buffalo)

Common grant-writing practice includes contributing text and ideas from project participants and incorporating language from earlier proposals to form a thoroughly merged document that may be impossible to sort out later. The implication of a dispute at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) is that such practice can be viewed as plagiarism. A UCSF faculty panel and an outside arbitrator agreed that cardiologist Joseph Abbott was guilty of plagiarism in a grant application, as charged by fellow cardiologist David Siegel. Large parts of un-
changed text from a previous grant, in which Siegel was the PI, were submitted without Siegel’s permission. Observers are split on the validity of the practice. Abbott is considering an appeal in the courts. Meanwhile, grant writers may want to look closer at the boilerplate text they use, and at their relations with present and former collaborators. See — Barinaga, Marcia, “UCSF Case Raises Questions About Grant Idea Ownership,” Science, v.277 (September 5, 1997), p.1430-1431.

Do Not Go Gently
by Phil Dankert (Cornell University)

Is the death of the monograph at hand? Although some would claim that reports to this effect are greatly exaggerated, scholarly publishers have begun experimenting with the “electronic monograph” — a scholarly book offered on the Internet.” In spite of the fact that there are early indications that they do not pay off financially, big questions about electronic monographs remain. What fields are most appropriate for this format? What is the best way to organize electronic publishing? Will tenure review committees accept monographs whose print runs are small, or eventually non-existent? See — Winkler, Karen J., “Academic Presses Look to the Internet to Save Scholarly Monographs,” Chronicle of Higher Education, September 12, 1997, p.A18, A20.

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