Bet You Missed It-Napster and Tax Holidays

Pamela M. Rose
Health Sciences Library, University at Buffalo, pmrose@acsu.buffalo.edu

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Inside Pandora’s Box
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perwork inside them while they await payment and shipping. Many sites provide this ordering and shipping documentation when an order is placed. Be prepared to make adjustments when communication and processing errors occur. There are many details that need to be learned by doing. Buyer dissatisfaction is rare and usually caused by an error on the seller’s side. Be liberal and kind in making adjustments; they are the teacher in book selling. Learn to package and ship carefully to protect and speed the book to its destination. Make the customer happy.

Wages are the principle cost incurred by Internet sales operations. Data entry, accounting, shipping and handling, stocking, and inventory maintenance, all cost employee wages. Libraries are not usually considered profit and loss operations and so we don’t always measure all the expenses when we decide to start an Internet book store. It is important to account for the activities and the number of workers required to carry out all the tasks, and to be committed to supply the personnel. Books must be priced, described, entered online, wrapped and shipped and accounting records kept for auditors. Customers correspond via email, telephone, or post, and someone must carry on the communication, usually a professional, experienced staff person who oversees the operation. We entered the Internet book trade gradually, experimenting with the earliest Ebusineses, and even posting to our own Website. Our success has been modest, but we continue to improve our procedures and to increase our sales.

Meeting the responsibility of prolonging the useful life of books that the library decides not to add is an important part of librarianship and should be given adequate attention and resources from the library administration. If the support is available the Internet book sale is one good way to fulfill that responsibility.

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Bet You Missed It

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

Column Editor: Pamela M. Rose (Web Services and Library Promotion Coordinator, Health Sciences Library, University of Buffalo) <pmrose@acsu.buffalo.edu> http://www.acsu.buffalo.edu/~pmrose

THERE’S NO FREE LUNCH, OR IS THERE?
by Pamela M. Rose (University at Buffalo)

Even though genome sequencing data can be accessed without charge through GenBank, a public database run by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), NIH scientists are negotiating terms to set up access to a Celera Genomics genome database to the tune of up to $15,000/user/year. National Cancer Institute (NCI) director Richard Klausner, whose staffs ran an informal evaluation, sees no legal or ethical problem in using public funds to acquire data freely available elsewhere if it is cost-effective and valuable.


THE REFRESH THAT DOESN’T PAUSE
by Pamela M. Rose (University at Buffalo)

Four months and 3000 pages later, two Stanford computer scientists concluded in their analysis of 270 popular sites that dot-com sites were refeshed significantly more often than those run by government and university sites.


TAKE IT TO THE BANK
by Pamela M. Rose (University at Buffalo)

Pharmacogenomics, the tailoring of drugs to a person’s genetic profile, must overcome scientific and ethical obstacles before it becomes a reality. First Genetic Trust Inc. of Deerfield Park, IL hopes to alleviate the obstacle of confidentiality of an individual’s genetic data by acting as an intermediary between patients and researchers. The company would store a person’s genetic data in its confidential database and use the Internet to ensure informed consent before allowing dissemination of that data to clinical researchers. The Trust is teaming up with the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center to test the scheme in a protocol involving genetic counseling for 50 women with genetic mutations putting them at high risk for breast cancer. Critics cite worries that the third-party scheme could turn out to be more complex than the present system of controlling access to medical data.


IMPOSSIBLE PHYSICS
by Pamela M. Rose (University at Buffalo)

Physicist John Hubisz concludes that today’s physics textbooks are deplorable, plagued with errors, irrelevant photographs, experiments that could not work, and diagrams representing impossible situations. One egregious text confuses “force” and “acceleration” in describing gravity’s effect on an object. The problem is that in-house teams write the texts with no individual accountable for the final product. The complete report can be found at www.psr-online.org/curriculum/book.html.

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**TAX HOLIDAY OR TAX SUBSIDY?**

by Pamela M. Rose (University at Buffalo)

To use tax holidays as a recruiting lure or wait for increased operating grants from the Canadian government — that is the question. Quebec is offering for the tax holiday to scholars who relocate to universities in the province, while Ontario is seeking $350 million for a recruiting drive, in anticipation of retirements and a projected 40% increase in enrollment.


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**SO SHUT UP, ALREADY**

by Bruce Strauch (the Citadel)

A Washington writer discovers the zoo-like atmosphere of today's libraries and longs for the old custodians with glasses on a chain (remember real librarians?) who used to say "shush." Every place today is a performance venue and libraries have joined restaurants, movie theaters and museums where no voice is stifled and no technology must be used quietly.


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**HIDE IT IN THE LIBRARY FEES**

by Bruce Strauch (the Citadel)

Troy Williams, Harvard Law grad gave up the big firm world to create a web library called Questia Media. He's raised mega bucks from venture capitalists and started digitizing books with a target of 250,000 by 2003. Two hundred academic presses have gone for his offer of free digitization in exchange for revenue sharing. Now his problem is getting college kids past their idea that anything on the web ought to be free and convincing them to buy his service. Well, we know the answer to that, even if Forbes didn't. Sell the service to the college and get them to buy the cost in the library fees.


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**ARE RIPPED CDS REALLY FREE?**

by Bruce Strauch (the Citadel)

Letter to the Editor in the Street Journal asks an interesting question. Are those college kids using Napster really getting a free CD? Burning equipment, blank CD and time spent downloading might actually exceed the cost of a CD in a store. He also points out that Napster — a single, in-place company — was providing music giants marketing and promotion for free — something which they otherwise paid huge for.


<http://www.against-the-grain.com>