And They Were There -- Reports of Meetings -- Fifth Timberline Acquisitions Institute and ALA Annual Conference

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Books Are Us

by Anne K. Robichaux (Professor Emerita, Medical University of South Carolina) <awkr7721@sc-online.net>

Column Editor's Note: This column covers fictitious accounts of people in our industry—librarians, publishers, vendors, booksellers, etc.—like us. All contributions, comments, suggestions are welcomed.

Charleston Conference attendees, don’t miss this! Jan LaBeau (Director of the Medical Library & Peyton T. Anderson Learning Resources Center, Mercer University School of Medicine, Macon, GA) is on the program this fall, both times on Thursday, November 4th. She has an entertaining and informative presentation on how librarians are depicted in film. I was fortunate to be able to hear her presentation, “SHH . . . Your Image Is Showing: Hollywood Looks at Librarians,” at the Georgia Health Sciences Library Association’s meeting last year in Savannah.

And speaking of Jan, thanks to her and to Teri Lynn Herbel (Medical University of South Carolina Library) for alerting me to a planned Turner Network Television (TNT) movie, “The Librarian.” The December 5th air date was announced in the September 10, 2004 edition of USA Today with “Bookmark this: Noah Wyle stars as heroic ‘Librarian.’” Actor Noah Wyle (from the TV series “ER”) has the lead role, calling his character more of a “branimac” than a “cool, dashing, heroic type.” The announcement at tzvzap24.com admitted that the title “doesn’t exactly set hearts racing” but that the premise for the action-adventure movie is “intriguing.” Wyle’s character, Flynn Carsen, is a librarian for a repository of mythical objects from throughout human history. As explained at cinemarchive.com, the library stores magical items and Flynn is an “overly smart curator.” An article from All Reuters News (http://ny.yahoo.com/news) titled “Devil Catalogs Librarian for TNT” further explained that the “cache” of mythical objects is “secured beneath the New York Public Library” and Flynn must guard them against forces of evil. We wonder if Flynn will join the ranks of such superheroes as Spiderman, Superman, Batman, and Wonder Woman? As the USA Today article begins, “Bookworms of the world, rejoice! Now you have an action-adventure hero: The Librarian.”

Elizabeth Connor (Daniel Library, The Citadel) reviewed The Image and Role of the Librarian (Haworth Information Press, 2002, ISBN 0-8790-2099-8) in a recent issue of the Journal of the Medical Library Association (J Med Libr Assoc 2004 July; 92(3) 379-80). The book is edited by Wendi Arant and Candace R. Benefiel, outreach services librarian and senior humanities reference librarian, respectively, at Texas A & M University Libraries. Past and present images and perceptions of librarians in literature, entertainment, and actual work settings are included in this book of ten contributed articles focused on professional roles, cultural images, popular perceptions, and future trends. One article is devoted to shedding the stereotypes! The cultural images section includes personality types of librarians in film, images of librarians in comic books, and librarian characters from almost a century of children’s literature. Click on http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/ to read Elizabeth’s excellent review.

In Morality for Beautiful Girls (Anchor Books Edition, 2002, ISBN 1-4000-3136-2, pbk.), author Alexander McCall Smith mentions “the ever-helpful librarian of the British Council Library” who was able to produce a requested book within mere minutes for one of the characters in this novel. Morality is the third title in the charming No. 1 Ladies’ Detective Agency series. Set in Botswana, the featured character, Precious Ramotswe, has started a detective agency and has gleaned all of her knowledge from her professional bible, The Principles of Private Detection. Mma Ramotswe’s resourceful assistant, Mma Makutsi, prefers the more scholarly Theories of Crime, and frequently delves into issues of The Journal of Criminology.

Author Kathy Reichs describes a couple of exchanges between her main character, forensic anthropologist Temperance Brennan, and a “limb-haired dragon” of a librarian in Fatal Voyage (Scribner, 2001, ISBN 0-684-85972-6). The librarian is officious about policy, allowing Dr. Brennan only one box of microfilm at a time when her research required multiple film boxes. When Dr. Brennan explained that she knew how to use the microfilm reader, she interpreted the librarian’s expression as seeing her worst nightmare: “a civilian loose in the stacks.” Later, when Dr. Brennan answers her cell phone in the library, the librarian admonished her as loudly as she could “without using vocal cords,” then asked her to leave, being further described as “the Gestapo protegeress of the printed word.” Hmmm. I just may side with the librarian on that one!

There are several descriptions of a character named Daisy who works in a small New York town library in Dangerous Behavior (Carroll & Graf, 2002, ISBN 0-7867-1043-8), a novel by Walter Marks. Daisy is a looker, hot-looking, a fox, and a “nice, bright lady” who generally wears tight clothes that show off her most attractive assets. She has clear, grey eyes, long, unruly blonde hair, a girlish smile, and “white-as-Chleots.” teeth. She also has a penchant for painting her fingernails various colors—blue, purple, silver, orange—whenever she appears in the story. As the story progresses, Daisy is also described as mixed-up, manipulative, dangerous, calculating and obsessive. We learn that she is in love with a man who is serving time in prison for killing a young mother in front of her child a number of years ago. Daisy is intent on marrying the prisoner, and attempts to use her feminine wiles to convince the prison psychiatrist, another main character, that her beloved is innocent. Fingertip polish colors aside, Daisy is a colorful character and is key to the story line of the novel.

And They Were There

Reports of Meetings — Fifth Timberline Acquisitions Institute and ALA Annual Conference

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Report by Thelma Diercks <thelma@hawaii.edu>

Clouds of fog enveloped us as we snaked upward toward our destination at the 6,000 foot level of Mt. Hood northwest of Portland. When we finally rose above the wet swirls, we could see the massive Timberline Lodge standing in stone silence under overcast skies.

I thought a bit apprehensively, “So, this is the Overlook Hotel” of movie fame. But, I was not there as a film buff. No, I was there to attend, of all things, the Fifth Timberline Acquisitions Institute: “New Discoveries on Lost Lake.”

Set in a unique venue, the Institute, May 15-18, 2004, brought together librarians, vendors and publisher to discuss acquisitions issues held in common. With a total of eighty-five registrants, the conference included continued on page 79
good representation from the Pacific Northwest and professionals from throughout the United States and a sprinkling of Canadians. I was the first attendee ever from Hawaii.

Sunday May 16. The keynote address by Henry Yapel, College Librarian (Whitman College) reflected on his professional beginning as an acquisitions librarian. Yapel's typing and filing of six-part purchase orders in the 1970's taught him lessons about practical efficiencies.

His presentation was followed by a talk on "Defining Functional Requirements for Acquisitions Records: Vendor Metadata" by Katharine Farrell (Princeton University) and Marc Trott (University of Houston), a 21st century proposal for refining online acquisitions. A panel discussion on acquisitions standards in an automated world rounded out the morning.

Professor William Fisher of the School of Library and Information Science (San Jose State University) discussed the "Impact of Technology on Reading Behavior", a brief history of reading beginning with cave paintings. In today's world, readers tethered to computers displaying information screen by screen still find great satisfaction in a book, which is portable, was Professor Fisher's happy conclusion.

The remaining two afternoon presentations were "A Leap in the Dark: A Pilot Project for an E-only Engineering Collection" by Oregon State University librarians Laurel Kristick and Margaret Melling and "Migration to Electronic Journals: One Library's Journey" by Gwen Bird (Simon Fraser University).

Monday May 17. The morning began with a look at the challenges of publishing the Journal of Phycology, an international journal of algal research. Professor Patricia A. Wheeler (Oregon State University), editor, gave the audience a behind the scenes look at what it takes to keep a scholarly journal afloat.

A panel of publishers — Daviess Menefee (Elsevier), Peter Milroy (University of British Columbia Press) and Niko Pfund (Oxford University Press) followed with thoughts about publishing in today's world. There were many questions directed to Menefee who answered surely and suavely. Milroy examined the crumbling position of university presses. Pfund described the manuscript review process, selection, editing, and production preceding the birth of a book.

Of the five presentations in the afternoon, the last one "The Ethics of Academic Collection Development in a Politically Contentious Era" by Wendy Highby (University of Northern Colorado) was riveting, a thought-provoking essay on a librarian's selection responsibilities in a world of conflicting ideologies.

Tuesday, May 18. The one morning session "Wrap Up: New Discoveries or Still Lost?" was a town hall opportunity for attendees to comment on their experience at the Institute and suggest topics for next year before heading home from Timberline.

The Acquisitions Institute met in a spacious room with a view of majestic Mt. Hood from the lanai. Above the meeting room was the Raven's Nest where we had tasty, hearty buffet breakfasts, lunches and dinners.

As there was no skiing or dips in the heated outdoor pool after dark, evening entertainment was homemade. There were movies. One librarian had been coaxed into bringing her how-to home video on insinuating cows. Not for me. I retreated to the Blue Ox Bar decorated with murals of Paul Bunyan and Babe where librarians shared favorite readings over a glass of wine (Oregon pinot noir is excellent).

On a brisk morning from my second floor room with a panoramic view of the Cascades, skies were clear enough so that I could see Lost Lake with Mt. Jefferson standing behind it. Had I made "new discoveries" at the Acquisitions Institute? Yes. It may have been the influence of the majestic Cascades that found me reflecting on the endurance and timelessness of the book.
Logs were harvested from Oregon forests and transformed into building materials and furniture. Blacksmiths hammered iron into grates for fireplaces, light fixtures and door handles. Fabric woven from wool and flax provided the material for drapes and bedspreads. Check http://www.timberline-lodge.com/defaultweb.asp for more information.

I read from The Reptile Room from the Series of Unfortunate Event by Lemony Snicket, from Instant Lives by Howard Moss with drawing by Edward Gorey (PS 3525. O8638. 15 1974) I choose to read the Beethoven vignette.

Panelists Douglas Greenberg (President and Chief Executive Officer of the Shohah Virtual History Foundation) and William Ivey (Director, Curb Center for Art, Enterprise, and Public Policy, Vanderbilt University); Moderator Abbey Smith (Director of Programs, Council on Library and Information Resources).

In the coolness of the hotel ballroom protected from the blazing, orange Orlando sun, but not very far from the make-believe worlds of Disney whirling and Universal Studio flickering, an audience was asked to focus on a timepiece: “The Clock of the Long Now.”

In a book by the same name, author Stewart Brand challenges readers to stretch their sense of time, to think in longer terms, to think about a 10,000-year clock. Brand’s Clock of the Long Now inspired the subject of the day.

The speakers expressed an urgency for libraries not only to collect everything they’ve always collected and even more. Equally important, they urged the preservation for future generations of these artifacts and processes of contemporary life. Cultural memory in the form of books have survived the centuries and have achieved a certain permanence in contrast to information displayed on transient screens. Can libraries capture the cultural memory “published” on TV and computer screens, videotape and sound tracks? Can the intangible masses of sights and sounds be organized and made accessible for use and preserved for all time?

Greenberg urged librarians to collect “as fast as you can” and to insure access to what is collected. Greenberg invoked Andrew Marvel’s “To his Coy Mistress” — “But at my back I always hear; Times winged Cherriot hurrying near.” He also quoted Satchel Paige: “Don’t look back; they may be gaining on you.”

Ivey urged pursuit of concrete goals to develop public support for preservation and access. Create incentives for companies to preserve and make available their materials. Use existing agencies (e.g., Federal Trade Commission) to assist in cultural assessment plan. Make clear what fair use is. Expand the licensing process to make possible licensing without advanced request. And finally, forge alliances. Support the “Good Guys.”

PVLR, formerly the Publisher/Vendor-Library Relations Committee, is alive and well as an ALCTS interest group.

One Orlando highlight was a briefing on the 2007 changeover from a 10-digit to a 13-digit ISBN, delivered by Eric Thronson, of Baker & Taylor, who chairs the Internet Commerce Committee of BISAC. Eric convinced the group that this change in our standard will be like Y2K all over again; but this time all the bad things might really happen, as publishers, materials vendors, libraries, utilities, ILS vendors, and others will all need to get this right, and in the right sequence, if we want the whole business of ordering books to keep running nice and smoothly. PVLR will sponsor a forum on the 13-digit ISBN at the ALA Midwinter meeting in Boston. But don’t wait for the forum (although please do attend). All of us need to start looking at our systems and processes right now.

Eric has created a Website, at http://www.btol.com/isbn13/.


Report by Thelma Diercks <thelma@hawaii.edu>

PVLR also plans a forum for the 2005 ALA Annual Conference in Chicago. The Electronic Resource Management Initiative (ERMI) of the Digital Library Federation (DLF) has been working for several years to develop common specifications and tools for managing the license agreements, related administrative information, and internal processes associated with collections of electronic content, with a final report released in summer 2004. One year after that, a PVLR forum will offer an overview of the ERMI findings, and responses to it from a publisher, a vendor, and a library. We hope to see many of you at this forum as well.

And finally, the PVLR forum in Orlando, organized by Sandy Beecher of Lewis & Clark College, was called, “When are eBooks THE Books?” Four panelists discussed successful eBook models: Bob Brand, from Knoed; Greg Giblin, from Wiley; Kimberley Parker, from Yale University Libraries; and Mark Sandler, from the University of Michigan Libraries.

Ruth Fischer, of R2 Consulting, moderated the forum.

To get involved with PVLR, contact Ruth Fischer, PVLR chair, at <ruth@r2consulting.org>.

We’ll, Orlando was HOT but I have to say I did not mind that all that much — I was staying close to the Convention Center and my hotel had 3 pools and I took advantage of this at least twice. And of course, all indoor space was air-conditioned, perhaps too much at times. So it goes. My biggest complaint was the completely commercial ambiance of the place. There were more casino restaurants than I have ever seen in one place. This was definitely a “re-fraud” — and you can quote this!

The other “theme” was the far-flung, widespread number of meeting spaces. This caused a lot of agony and many people either were late for meetings or skipped sessions that they would have liked to attend because it was impossible to get to them on time. Someone told me that they arrived for a program and none of the speakers or the introducers were there — after waiting for over 20 minutes after the scheduled start time! (reminds one of college — wait a certain number of minutes for a grad assistant, more for a full prof…)

The best program I went to was “Open Access, Open Minds,” which included a fabulous presentation by Lawrence Lessing. (We have to get him to Charleston!!) The other speakers were good, but paled in comparison.

I enjoyed the authors at the FOLUSA breakfast (Robert Kennedy Jr. had terrible laryngi-
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