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From Your (water-logged) Editor

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It's hard to believe but this is the eighth year in a row that ATG has dedicated our September issue to reference publishing. However, this year we have decided to throw in a new wrinkle. Because databases have become so much a part of reference work, we have expanded our coverage to include their place in reference publishing. In fact, Fran Wilkinson's and Linda Lewis' annual front page interview poses a number of probing questions to six academic librarians to get their opinions on "the rapidly changing world of reference databases." Topics include selection criteria and who does the selecting as well as current budget allocations, the impact of collections, and the future of open access all weave their way into the discussion. This issue also finds Choice's Irv Rockwood following through on his promise of a follow up article to last year's "Reference Publishing: The View from Middletown." In that piece Irv talked about the obvious decline in the number of print reference works, the increasing consolidation among publishers and a perceived movement to Web publishing. This time Irv offers an update by concentrating the publisher's perspective on electronic reference publishing. Using data from a Choice online survey of reference publishers, he documents a "steady if at times hesitant and uncertain shift to electronic materials." We also have an insightful interview with George Machovec, editor of the The Charleston Advisor. TC4 is one of the few journals dedicated to reviewing databases for the library market so George sees the industry from a unique vantage point. He sheds light on the current status of database publishing and offers some interesting ideas about the future.

Of course, we have a number of articles that focus on the traditional print part of reference publishing. Karen Christensen, co-founder of Berkshire Publishing offers a personal recipe for quality in a reference book publishing that stresses three main ingredients: vision, validity, and voice. Karen's fresh take on quality makes enlightening reading for librarians as well as publishers. You won't want to miss it. Sylvia K. Miller, Publishing Director of Reference at Routledge/Taylor & Francis offers a publisher's prescription for useful reference book reviews. Having done a few reference book reviews myself, I found Sylvia's critique both reassuring and challenging. Readers of reviews will find some valuable tips on what makes a good review. Never four of our special report authors, Stephanie Kozak discusses "Preservations Woes" while Anthony Ferguson talks about "Patriotism." And there's much more I don't have room to mention, so read on and enjoy!

Well, I hear there is a tornado watch in the area so I have to shut off my computer and take refuge in the bathtub or in a ditch. Can't remember which. This weather will be better in November! See you at the Conference.

Yr. Ed.

Letter to the Editor:

Send letters to <kstrauch@comcast.net>, phone or fax 843-723-3536, or snail mail: Against the Grain, MSC 98, The Citadel, Charleston, SC 29409. You can also send a letter to the editor from the ATG Homepage at http://www.against-the-grain.com.

Dear Editor:

Thank you for making this conference happen. It has been the single greatest asset for me in learning and keeping up with things I have needed to keep working on in this field.

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