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Letters to the Editor

Katina Strauch
Against the Grain, kstrauch@comcast.net

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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 like selection criteria and who does the selecting as well as current budget allocations, the impact on 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 electronic publishing. This time Irv offers an update by concentrating on 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 Berkeley 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 make a good review.

From Your (waterlogged) Editor:

I now own a waterfront property. My front yard is a lake. It has been raining in Charleston non-stop since the first of August. This means that I had lots of time at home inside the house to play with my computer, clean up my house, and avoid hurricanes and power outages. Fun and games.

This issue of Against the Grain is full! We have all the fabulous feature articles our guest editor, Tom Gibson, talks about above plus more special reports on acquisitions and ILL, guest edited by Michelle Pfluechbauch and Robin Moskal. Interviews include Jim Stephens and George Machovec with profiles as well from four of our special report authors. Stephanie Kobezak 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.

Edna Laughrey, Ads Manager. Address: 291 Tower Drive, Saline, MI 48176; Internet: ealugrey@aol.com; Phone: 734-429-1029; Fax: 734-429-1711.

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