November 2013

ATG Fiction Contest

Editor

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Recommended Citation
Editor (2005) 'ATG Fiction Contest,' Against the Grain: Vol. 17: Iss. 2, Article 45.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.4826

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Op Ed — Succès de Scandale: Reaction to I, User

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As a conversation starter the piece in your last issue by Rick Lugg and Ruth Fischer ("I, User — Just Say No: Eliminating Low-Value Tasks") must be judged a succès de scandale. The authors no doubt anticipated heated responses on the part of their readers and they won’t be disappointed. Many of the two dozen suggestions they make seem likely to further erode both the quality of service provided to our patrons and the image those patrons have of libraries and the people who operate them. Among the more alarming:

1) “stop item by item book selection” — taken to its logical conclusion this would obviate the need to hire subject specialists, leaving the task of collection development to Baker and Taylor, Blackwell, etc. In addition to giving these companies inordinate power over the content of collections, such a move would make it almost impossible for titles published by smaller companies (or individuals) to reach libraries, especially considering that another of the authors’ suggestions is for libraries to stop accepting gifts.

2) “stop putting new books out for review” — by this, do they mean eliminating the practice of allowing patrons to see the newest acquisitions before they are integrated into the collection? If so, they would probably also argue against maintaining a list of new arrivals that can be viewed by patrons on paper (or even online), since it too involves extra work. Allowing patrons to review a library’s newest acquisitions in one place makes it possible for them to see how at least some of the acquisitions budget is being spent — it could be likened to the various state and federal Open Meetings laws — and doing away with New Books shelves could be perceived by the public as an attempt by a library to avoid accountability.

3) “stop periodic check-in, at least for some categories of material” — I am regularly asked by patrons whether we have received the latest issue of this or that title that wasn’t in its assigned place on the current peri-

IT’S TRUE!!!!!!

Fiction Contest in Against the Grain

$250 prize

How many of you are working on the Great American Novel, Short Stories, Poetry?

Here’s your chance to get into print and reach thousands of readers starved for fiction that tells the story of libraries and librarians, publishing and bookselling, but we’re open to any original works—your imagination is the limit.

A fiction page will become a regular feature of ATG after this contest, so sharpen your pencils and tell us your story.

Deadline for entries is August 15, 2005.

ATG LAUNCHING NEW FICTION PAGE

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