Bet You Missed It -- Press Clippings -- In the News -- Carefully Selected by Your Crack Staff of News Sleuths

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The Citadel

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Bet You Missed It

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

Column Editor: Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Editor’s Note: Hey, are y’all reading this? If you know of an article that should be called to Against the Grain’ s attention … send an email to <kstrauch@comcast.net>. We’re listening! — KS

VIVE KING CONTENT
by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Viacom is demanding Google take down 100,000 clips on YouTube that violate copyright. Some are laughing; others call it a negotiating tactic.

All the same, the Internet won’t stomp TV networks the way it did the music moguls. YouTube carries snappy clips of cats flushing toilets, but most are viewed solely by the poster. And it has no proven revenue model. Which is to say YouTube is virtually worthless.

TV still has hugely popular shows that gather millions of viewers and advertisers need the platform so badly they will pay big bucks to keep it around.


DOING THE DRM SHUFFLE
by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Apple’s wildly successful iTunes protects music from piracy by their version of copy protection (DRM generally in the industry) by their technology FairPlay. And iTunes can only be played on Apple iPods. But now Europe is huffing and puffing and demanding they de-link the two so European players can get in the game.

Now under pressure, Steve Jobs is saying let’s get rid of DRM altogether. He says it was the music industry that made him do it. But he could license FairPlay DRM to other music player outfits. But he says that would reveal the FairPlay mechanism and allow others to pirate it and the whole music biz would pull out of the current licensing deal.

And he knows full well the elimination of DRM would be the death of the music industry. So is he just trying to create a diversion?


EMBRACING BOILED PEANUTS
by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

For Charleston Conference loyalists, be sure to read the entire “Eat, Drink & Be Local” issue of Charleston magazine. But especially follow the soaring career path of celebrity food geeks, the Lee brothers. They enthuse over boiled peanuts, the official state snack food for S.C., and have developed a boiled peanut and sorghum swirl ice cream. And they have their own cookbook which our daughter uses religiously.


As I See It! — Even Fewer And Larger

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The pace of consolidation in the scholarly publishing space is moving even faster. Most of us have paid attention only to publishers and vendors. There has been a lot to watch in the last ten years! And now aggregators and indexing services have hit the radar screen.

During 2006, two major players suddenly appeared in the news. ProQuest ran into regulatory and financial trouble, and then changed hands. And Thomson announced that it was going to exit the education market, and put Thomson Learning up for sale; Gale is part of Thomson Learning. Are these events connected? Do they say anything about the changing ecology of aggregators?

On the face of it, the two are not connected. Thomson Learning is the second largest textbook publisher — the biggest is Pearson. Its operating performance in recent years has not matched other divisions of Thomson. Like most textbook publishers, Thomson Learning has found the migration of its business from print to electronic to be a formidable challenge. It has, in its parent company’s eyes, made slow progress in doing so. The Gale operation itself, thought of as an aggregator and electronic re-publisher, still has considerable print activity in its reference publishing. Its aggregated databases are caught up in this larger corporate decision.

There are a number of unanswered questions. Will Thomson succeed in selling Thomson Learning as a whole, or will it have to break it up to find buyers? If a buyer is found, will it be the whole, who will it be? If one of the other major textbook publishers makes an offer, there may be difficult anti-trust and competition issues to contend with. Will a private equity group move in to buy it with the existing management? At least that would not raise any anti-trust or competition issues. It is too early to tell.

ProQuest is a different story. In December ProQuest Information and Learning was acquired by the Cambridge Information Group (CIG), which includes the CSA, RefWorks, Bowker and Ulrich brands. But the story started some time ago. ProQuest is a public company. It has spent most of 2006 grappling with accounting irregularities, most of which appeared to reside in its Information and Learning unit. It has had to restate its accounts since 2001, and file restated accounts with the SEC.

It had already sold its Business Solutions unit which provided services to car dealers. When the sale of Information and Learning to CIG took place, between Thanksgiving and Christmas, we had our minds on festive things.

CIG has announced that it will merge ProQuest Information and Learning with CSA.

The CSA business comprises over 100 databases — mostly bibliographic — in the humanities, social sciences and science. ProQuest has a lot of full text products in news, business, economics, social sciences and the humanities. Its products encompass Chadwyck-Healey, SIRS, Serial Solutions, and full text products containing newspapers, continued on page 78

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