

# Cites & Insights

Crawford at Large  
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## Bibs & Blather

### Sponsorship, Projects and News

Since January 2005, YBP Library Services has provided sponsorship for *Cites & Insights*.

That sponsorship will end at the end of 2009.

I'm extremely grateful to YBP for the sponsorship; it's helped keep *C&I* going.

#### *New sponsor needed*

I need a new sponsor (or group of sponsors) for *Cites & Insights*, for 2010 and beyond.

Candidates could include any group involved with or interested in library issues (or the issues discussed in the journal). I'd be most comfortable with a sponsor whose own activities I'd be unlikely to discuss in any case. That includes, for example:

- Library automation companies
- Library consortia
- Database and index companies
- Other companies directly serving libraries—booksellers etc.

*C&I* has strong readership. As noted in the May 2009 issue, the journal's had nearly 1.4 million pageviews in more than three-quarters of a million sessions. Roughly half the issues have had at least 4,000 readers, with 12 having more than 6,000 (and one having more than 22,000). Adding pageviews for separate HTML articles, more than 60 articles have been read at least 7,000 times and another 94 at least 5,000 times.

#### *Please contact me*

Send me email if you're interested in discussing sponsorship: waltcrawford at gmail.com. The sponsor will be mentioned on the website, on the front and back page of each issue, and on every separate HTML article.

#### *A note about other forms of revenue*

Could I gain enough revenue, or comparable revenue, directly from readers?

The paperback annual editions of *C&I* have been priced to be direct revenue generators (and if someone buys a downloadable version, they're essentially contributing \$40). So far, revenue from that source averages about \$10 a year...not quite enough to replace sponsorship.

Early on, I had PayPal and Amazon Tip Jar links to allow direct contributions. I did receive some—but the total was, as I remember, in the low three digits.

I'm open to suggestions.

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## Projects

I'm not quite ready to write that essay on "Success and failure at PoD publishing." It may wind up as a column elsewhere, or it may appear here later. It's fair to say that one of my attempts has been reasonably successful—and that the rest have pretty much failed. I think there are some interesting lessons and some issues specific to the books themselves.

On *Walt at Random*, I discussed four possible "book-size" projects for the future. These are all projects that could result in PoD (or traditionally published) books and they're all projects I suspect would take a few hundred hours' work. I'd planned to make decisions right around June 1. As of this writing, here's where things stand:

- *Balanced Libraries, Second Edition*: Not going to happen, at least not any time soon.
- *Blogging for Libraries*, a replacement for both *Public Library Blogs* and *Academic Library Blogs*: Not going to happen barring full sponsorship. Period. If someone wants the core spreadsheets used for the 2007 projects, get in touch; something might be arranged.

- *The Liblog Landscape Revisited*: Based on book sales, this should also be a “not gonna happen” situation—but it’s not that easy. Consider this one still up in the air. I could work on it anyway, probably publishing most results in *Cites & Insights*; I could postpone it until 2010 (but that’s tricky); I could abandon it.
- *Libraries as short-run publishers*: This could be a combination of book and workshop. I’ve had one or two nibbles of interest, and this might be a slightly smaller project—but so far, I haven’t seen enough solid interest to assure me that the work would yield a substantial tangible benefit either to me or to libraries. I also haven’t entirely abandoned this idea, but I have this fear that I could do a great book and workshop proposal, sell five copies of the book, and have ten people attend the one and only workshop. That would be a lose:lose situation.

There are always other possibilities, of course—particularly in a new home in a new city with a fairly large library.

## News

*Walt at Random* moves to a new home in early June: ScienceBlogs. I’ve been invited to join the new group of information science bloggers, a group that began with John Dupuis and Christina Pikas. After examining the situation and other ScienceBlogs blogs, I accepted. You’ll find future posts at [scienceblogs.com/waltatrandom/](http://scienceblogs.com/waltatrandom/)

The archive will stay at [walt.lishost.org](http://walt.lishost.org) (I’m hoping it will also be available at the new site), but if there are new posts after the post announcing the move (other than announcements of *Cites & Insights* issues), they’ll be under the banner *Walt, Even Randomer*—and yes, I’m aware that “randomer” is a dumberer kind of word.

You may see more substantive posts at the new *Walt at Random*—that is, more posts with substance, and possibly posts with more substance.

*Cites & Insights* is not part of this arrangement. See the first section of *BIBS & BLATHER*: I’m looking for new sponsorship.

## Making it Work Perspective

# Thinking about Blogging 2: Why We Blog

Last time around (April 2009, *Cites & Insights* 9:5) I discussed blogging as a median medium, comments

and conversations as part of blogging (or as part of its definition) and staying power (whether blogs are here to stay). One theme noted in that article, “are blogs plausible replacements for journals,” became part of a LIBRARY ACCESS TO SCHOLARSHIP essay, “The Death of Journals (Film at 11).”

That leaves two of the original themes: Why we blog and how we blog. Why—the reasons people blog and philosophy of blogging—is more than enough for this installment.

Although most of the source material inspiring this essay comes from liblogs and it appears as a MAKING IT WORK PERSPECTIVE, it’s as applicable to other blogs as it is to liblogs. (I define “liblogs” broadly, including those from archivists and museum folk.)

## Archives and Anonymity

Start with Kate T.’s “The role of blogs in professional discourse in the archival profession,” posted June 26, 2008 on *ArchivesNext* ([www.archivesnext.com/](http://www.archivesnext.com/)). Portions of it are about more than archival blogging—they’re about anonymous blogs and comments.

Back in the very early days of this blog, I wrote a post that asked whether or not there was an archivo-blogsphere (comparable to the robust biblioblogsphere created by librarians). I came to the conclusion that there was not. Recently, Heather (of the *Archives Found* blog) wrote on a comment on that old post asking if my opinion has changed. I think it has, although I would still say that our archivo-blogsphere is in its infancy. This post will explain why I’ve changed my opinion and will also address some comments made at another blog about the value of blogs for professional discourse.

That earlier post appeared in March 2007. Kate found 58 English-language blogs, 15 primarily repository “bulletin board” blogs and five dormant. She did serious weeding—eliminating “primarily personal or social” blogs and those associated with niches or related professions, as well as those not originating in North America. That left 23 blogs, including seven averaging at least one post a week. That didn’t look like an active blog community to her.

Around the same time Heather raised her question, David Kemper (of *The DIGITAL Archive* blog) wrote a post called “How Blogs Can Save Your Career.” He said, in part:

As I walked down the bustling streets, I was caught in my thoughts, wondering how I have managed to stay current (more or less) despite being on contracts or, more recently, unemployed.

One word kept surfacing: **blogs**.

Seriously, if it were not for the many library and archives, Web 2.0, new media, digitization, digital preservation bloggers and social networkers on the Web, I would be far, far behind the curve.

It is thanks to those who, in the spirit of sharing, write and talk about their work, projects, ideas either daily, bi-weekly, weekly or monthly that I have been able to stay current in the field...

I believe in the power of blogs, their immediacy, their intimacy, and their uncanny ability to auto-generate communities, because I know I have benefited from them and learned from them. And continue to do so.

...I think we are gathering a critical mass of archivists writing and reading blogs. By my count we now have over 25 blogs written by archivists or related records professionals (in English) that they use to share their own opinions or items of interest... I think we've seen some valuable discussion of professional issues among the comments on this blog, and I'm told that it generates even more conversations around the lunch tables of many archival institutions.

So, we have archivists writing blogs, reading blogs, commenting on blogs and talking about blogs. Blogging is the subject of a seminar at the upcoming RBMS Pre-Conference... Archivists are using blogs to talk about our profession among ourselves and with our public. Many of us are using them to meet our information needs.

So you may understand my surprise when I read in one of Geof Huth's incredibly valuable posts about the Archives Leadership Institute (on *The Anarchivist* blog) that:

During the course of our wide ranging conversation, we found ourselves discussing the need for a more vibrant professional literature, and someone questioned the reliability of blogs and other new media, and the suitability of these to meet our informational needs.

...[Later] there was clarification about what was meant by "suitability."

Paraphrasing for brevity: One person involved in the conversation was concerned about the lack of real names on archival blogs. Another seconded this: "It is difficult to have a useful, citable professional conversation about issues when participants chose not to identify themselves."

Commenters offer reasons they remain anonymous—e.g., so they can criticize institutional policies without getting in trouble. Some people have concerns about privacy—including, early on, Kate T.

Here's an unusual comment, at least given my experience with liblogs in general:

I have also observed that identifying oneself by initials (or one initial, as my friend "T" has often done on this blog) or by a nickname is something of a convention in the world of blogs. Many people may be using nicknames or initials not because they're trying to hide something, but just because that's the way it's commonly done.

I've observed no such convention in liblogs. Of those studied in *The Liblog Landscape 2007-2008*, only 7% had the first name or first name and initial of the author, while 66% had full names and nearly 16% were group-authored with full names. Perhaps the conventions are different among archivists.

Kate T. comes down in favor of anonymity:

For the most part, I find myself agreeing with the observation Jim made in closing his comment over on Geof's blog:

In the end, I'd just suggest that a good idea, though expressed anonymously, does not make it any less a good idea. Anonymously posted information can still have value, even if not conveniently citable and therefore "scholarly."

While I'd agree that anonymously posted information can have value, I believe anonymity substantially weakens contributions to the professional literature and a blog's "suitability to meet our information needs." Kate T. asked for the views of others. She received three responses. One blogger suggested "fear of not knowing where the line is" as a reason for anonymity. Another cited privacy and perpetuity as reasons for privacy. A third, saying how much blogging has helped him, ends his comment: "It's a personal choice, but I just think being easily identified gives a blog more credibility and accountability."

This post isn't directly about "why"—except that the whys of anonymity also matter.

### *First-name bloggers*

Who blogs using only their first name or first name and initial (as far as I could determine without investigation)? Here's the list of liblogs that meet current inclusion standards for an update of *The Liblog Landscape* and had at least one post a week during the 2008 study period:

*Library Chronicles, Bad Librarianship Now!, Information Junk, Jennie Law, Laurie the Librarian, Atomic Librarian, The Misadventures of Super\_Librarian, Talking Books Librarian, BentleyBlog, LibraryTavern, SemiConscious Dot Org, The Utopian Library, Zee Says=Film Addict + Teen Librarian, Library Stories: Libraries & Librarians in the News, mēlange, Gemini Moon, the strange librarian, Terry's Worklog, Bad Girl Librarian, maura and the library, ADHD Librarian, Into the Stacks, Solvitur ambulando*

Two or three of those have well-known authors and are probably mischaracterized as first-name-only, but how many would you consider to be important sources of serious discussion of librarianship?

Here's the list of anonymous blogs meeting those criteria: *Angels have the phone box*, *Incoherent Scribbings*, *rawbrick.net*.

Here are the pseudonymous blogs that would still qualify for inclusion and that averaged at least one post a week:

*the.ffmpeg.librarian*, *Killin' time being lazy*, *zydeco fish*, *TangognaT*, *Tales from the "Liberry,"* *The Krafty Librarian*, *Misadventures of the Monster Librarian*, *Chronicles of the (almost) Bald Technology Trainer*, *Your Neighborhood Librarian*, *lo-fi librarian*, *Bigenarian Librarian*, *Chez Shoes*, *DrWeb's Domain*, *Quiescit anima libris*, *Pop Culture Librarian*, *Dojo of the Library Ninja*, *The Well Dressed Librarian*, *Dewey's Dartboard*, *Annoyed Librarian*, *Darth Libris*, *BookBitchBlog*, *Right Wing Librarian*, *Linux Librarian*, *The Soggy Librarian*, *The Hot Librarian*, *repressed librarian*, *The Zenformation Professional*, *Miss Information*

Maybe no comment is required. There are blogs in those lists that I regard as significant sources of thoughtful commentary—but not that many. (I'd probably name roughly half a dozen, but your standards may not be mine.) Of those I'd name, I'd guess half are first-name or pseudonymous in name only—that most readers of the blogs know the authors by full name. I could be wrong on all counts.

### ***Blogging and the archival profession***

Heather Soyka (fully named on the About page of her blog *Archives Found*, [archivesfound.com](http://archivesfound.com)) posted this on July 11, 2008, following up on her comment on Kate T's post. Soyka considers the role of blogging in the archival field: "I don't pretend to have all of the answers, but I'd like to raise some questions, and perhaps provoke discussion."

It seems to me that, as a group, we have been slow to participate in the blogosphere. While there are fewer archivists out there than say other groups with which we might identify (say, librarians or historians), it seems that we've been comparatively reluctant to dip our toes in the water. Why might that be? Are we less tech-savvy, or uninterested in using new technologies to communicate? Is it that we are mirroring the somewhat apathetic national participation in civic discourse? Is there a lack of interest in contributing to the field, or that we have nothing to say? Are we reticent about being record creators instead of worrying about the disposition of records?...

Why do some fields gain a core group of serious bloggers faster than others? I doubt there are good answers. If you go to state library conferences or even

ALA, you get the idea that librarians are surprisingly social animals—and this may be true online as well. Are archivists less social? Or was it a few evangelizing early libloggers who got things going?

Is a blog a good place to have a professional conversation? What about a peer-reviewed journal, or a listserv? How about a symposium, or a conference call, or workshop? In order to have participation, there needs to be a balance between "if you build it, they will come," and meeting people where they already are. In this case, my feeling is that a lot of folks are already doing everything else on this list, but not blogging or actively participating in the blogosphere. It's professionally acceptable for us to have discussions in all of those other places; why not online? Is a journal article in the *American Archivist* going to provoke the same type of timely discussion as a blog post? Maybe. But a discussion in real time, with participants from around the globe? Probably not.

Today, a librarian might posit that FriendFeed outdoes either blogs or, by a long shot, journal articles in terms of rapid conversation.

I'm not against more established forms of communication within the profession; far from it. But I think that we need to look towards the example of many librarians who have used their blogs to actively participate and shape their experiences in the field.

There it is: Library folk (some of us not librarians) have set an example.

...Part of the problem that hasn't been fully acknowledged is this: elders and so-called "names" in the field have not really embraced blogging or maintained their own blogs (with [one or two exceptions]). Archivists that are new to the field may be afraid of reprisal or blogging themselves out of their next job, or simply not willing to jump into the conversation. Those mid-career may have the same fears.

Relatively few "elders" in the library field maintain active blogs. Maybe libloggers fear reprisal less because the library field is so much bigger?

Soyka asks how archivists can move forward toward lively conversations in blogs. There were no direct comments on the post—in one sense, the conversation stalled right there. But that's not quite true: There was a conversation, but in an alternate mode, one that jumps from blog to blog.

Dani—first name only, but since she lists her workplace it's not a true disguise—posted "Blogging archivists" on July 17, 2008 at *Curious child's library wanderings* ([curiouschild.wordpress.com](http://curiouschild.wordpress.com)). She asked a question in May 2008 about archivists and social media in general—noting her astonishment at the number of librarians and others using Twitter and the lack of arc-

hivists using this “or any social networking service for that matter.” Excerpts from this followup post:

Like *Archives Next*, I’ve noticed the abundance of librarians who are tearing up the blogosphere and creating a new pedagogy for library instruction. And, after some digging, I’ve found some archivists who are also paving the way for new archivists by sharing project information, helpful suggestions, etc. The problem is that these blogs are not getting the same publicity as library blogs. Archivists have to be more proactive in their marketing... [She recommends advertising your blog on social networks, adding your URL to email signatures, commenting on other archivist blogs and sharing problems and solutions]

...I rely heavily on blogs and tweets to keep current and learn more about my profession. I rely on the expertise of those who have been working in the field for longer than I have, but I also like being able to commiserate with those who are new to the field. I know there are professional journals out there that offer the same professional support that I’m talking about but I like the instant gratification that comes from blogging and social networking. And I believe that we, as a profession, need to move forward by granting blogs and other web 2.0 technologies professional legitimacy.

Tearing up the blogosphere? Maybe. Creating a new pedagogy for library instruction? Have libloggers done that? Dani *did* draw comments—six of them, plus her responses. DKemper called it “A well-written and gutsy blog post that sheds light on what we as professionals need to do to encourage talk and discussion not only amongst ourselves at conferences but online, in the blogosphere, if you will, where so many colleagues in libraries have already congregated and push enormous quantities of content from many different voices out to readers.” Later in the conversation he adds two notes, one a significant caveat:

To embrace these new technologies is really to embrace the ideals of sharing and communicating information and exchanging knowledge, either among new archivists or between senior archivists and the next generation of archivists...

[T]he Social Web (blogs, micro-blogging, podcasts, social networking sites, etc) is time-consuming. It takes time to write quality blog content, for example. And for many archivists, time and other resources are limited and mainly directed to taking care ‘bread-and-butter’ business.

Paul Lasewicz has an internal blog—but continues:

But to blog externally, well, that assumes that somebody would read it! And even if that’s so, the time invested produces too few benefits to justify taking time away from other things ... like my family.

The best argument *against* blogging is that it takes time (and if it’s not part of your workplace, you shouldn’t be doing it on work time). “That assumes somebody would read it” is interesting, given the number of libloggers who regularly talk about “my two readers” or the like—a phrase that could be false humility but could also reflect the uncertainty most of us have as to whether we’re reaching anybody.

Gordon offered a comment that may mirror the thoughts of many libloggers and other bloggers on why we blog (substitute “librarian” or other profession for “archivist”):

As someone who just recently started blogging, for me it is an exercise in intellectual curiosity. Blogging is a way to throw ideas up against the wall and see what sticks. By communicating my active interests in a blog I not only inform others, but I also educate myself and hopefully make myself a better archivist in the process by interacting with others.

From there, the conversation jumped back to *ArchivesNext* in a July 18, 2008 post:

#### *Archivists and blogging, the conversation continues*

Kate T. sees this turning into something that “kind of looks like a discussion.” She doubts that archivists don’t blog because they’re not comfortable with technology or with creating records—but *does* think people fear disclosure and reprisal. She continues:

I think it’s a great sign that more and more people are starting processing blogs and other blogs that share information about their repositories... But, I think the kind of participation Heather is looking for, like me, is in the area of opinion and discussion of professional issues. That is where we are weak... I think risk-aversion and fear are very real factors that hold people back from writing or commenting (and from signing their full names, even if they chose to contribute).

I sincerely believe that stating an opinion that may be controversial is potentially dangerous in our profession and this inhibits many people from publicly sharing their views. This may be true in all professions, but I am only speaking here about ours. I think people are right to be cautious. We are a comparatively small profession with a tight job market. No one wants to risk that an all-too-honest comment on a blog will cost them a job. I wish it were true that no one would hold an honest opinion, expressed in a professional manner, against you, but I do not think we live in that world.

Are librarians more fearless? Probably not, but it’s a much larger field. The Society of American Archivists has some 3,100 individual members and 500 institutional members. ALA has considerably more than

60,000 members, and there may be a lot more librarians who aren't ALA members than archivists who aren't in SAA. Proportionally, it's possible that archivists are *more* active bloggers than library people.

I also think there's an element of something like snobbery at play. I think quite a few people in our profession think blogs, and the people who write and read them, aren't "serious" or "scholarly." (And don't even think of bringing up something like Facebook!). Our opinions are not reviewed or mediated and they don't come with footnotes. If blogs are not taken seriously, why would serious people spend time writing or reading them?...

Are liblogs taken seriously? Yes, but it's a slow process. Are liblogs considered scholarly? Not so much.

...I think that a lot of us who are interested in writing, reading, and contributing to open, unmediated, relatively informal professional discussions via blogs are already here and doing it. We don't care if the rest of the profession doesn't take what we do seriously. We see the value for ourselves and our colleagues and that's enough. There are probably many more who would do so if only they were given some kind of indication that to do is accepted as a serious professional activity. One way to achieve this kind of seal of approval is by word of mouth, and I think we're doing a good job of achieving that. Keep telling your colleagues that there are some great blogs out there that they need to be reading. Send them the links. If you're not commenting, take a few minutes to post a comment (with your name, of course) to show newbies that these blogs aren't out there in a vacuum.

Most library people who start *and continue* liblogs do so for similar reasons.

There's more to the post—dealing with fears and the desire for top-down recognition of blogs as valid fora for professional discourse. A comment from Jeanne offers another take on why we blog:

For me the driving reason to keep blogging is because I love doing this sort of research - I love pulling ideas together across disciplines. The handful of people passionate about the topics I am most intrigued by are so geographically dispersed that I feel that blogging is the best way to keep the conversation alive between like-minded individuals.

### *Speaking bloggers and the bloggers who blog them (and are in return blogged)*

Another from Kate T. at *ArchivesNext*. Although the post is a few months old (November 11, 2008), it marks a good closing point for this section—and with a metatitle as rich as that, how could I resist?

Kate T. participated in a session on blogging at a regional conference, a session that drew a good crowd.

Let me clarify—I don't know if it's "good" to step up to the podium and see three people who you know blog all sitting there in the third row with their laptops or mobile devices out and ready to go. And when they start typing away when you start talking, it can make you a bit nervous. Not me, of course. I was there to talk about my blog—this one—but I thought that probably most people in the audience would be more interested in more general tips and lessons learned about blogs than in the specifics of this one.

Kate summarizes the presentations and notes some of the blogging about the session. Then she draws some lessons "serious or otherwise" from "all this blogging about a blogging session"—lessons that apply equally to librarians, museum people and others:

First, people were able to post live, or virtually live, because the hotel had wireless in the meeting spaces. Any conference that wants to encourage bloggers (and the free publicity they offer) must make arrangements for free wireless. Going forward, I think this should be part of the conference amenities all archival organizations look for when selecting a venue...

Second...our blogging friends weren't quite prepared. Two lost power on their laptops and one lost a post because he was still learning how to work with some new software... These are reminders to be aware of the technical requirements of blogging.

Third...imagine the potential if we had fully powered, connected, and organized bloggers at all our conferences. I think a liveblogging session from an opening plenary, for example, would be fascinating...

I have mixed feelings about liveblogging from conference sessions; it too often seems to yield bullet points rather than holistic senses of what was being said, with the blogger's perspective added. I prefer well-prepared reports written after a session—but I'm realistic enough to know such reports are hard to come by these days, and maybe liveblogging is better than nothing. (Such liveblogging now seems more likely via Twitter or FriendFeed.) I've also realized that I can't safely *respond* to liveblogging (after some difficult examples), or even to post-session blogging about speeches: That is, it's simply not safe to assume that what's reported as being said has anything to do with what the speaker intended. (More to the point, speakers feel free to complain bitterly of being misinterpreted if you weren't actually at the session.)

The post drew *lots* of comments—19 in all, including Kate's five interleaved responses. The first commenter wants to see more active blogging from sessions; the second is "my kind of blogger," one who pulls notes together after the fact and doesn't find that liveblogging works for her. (Kate T. also blogs *after* a session.)

“Paul” raised an issue discussed in *C&I* previously, one I’m starting to think of as a lost cause:

The problem with all this parallel activity during a session is that it distracts—and detracts—from the presentations. Doesn’t anybody remember note taking in college? Okay, let me qualify that a bit: diligent note taking. It was hard to keep up with the speaker’s train of thought if you were capturing everything they said. Can it be any easier if you are typing or texting? And if you are only twittering quick idea captures, are you doing the speaker’s talk an appropriate amount of justice?

All I know is if I had an audience of typers, I’d tolerate it because it’s marginally better than having folks fall asleep on you. But I’m not sure how much tolerance I’d have for the first one who asks a follow up question to something I covered that he missed due to his sideline distractions.

I love Kate’s immediate response: “Well, I had someone who was both typing and sleeping, but he’s a special case...” She deferred to others to respond—and, frankly, I didn’t see much in the way of responses. “RobinRKC” might be giving an answer:

How many of us attend a conference session, diligently take detailed notes on paper, go back home, type up those notes, add an in-depth analysis of what was said, and then share them widely with our colleagues? Seriously? Twittering and blogging may not capture much more than key concepts and phrases, but that’s a whole lot more than I have seen from most conferences. It allows us all to start and continue discussions that aren’t possible within the confines of a traditional presentation.

But post-session blogging, summarizing and responding the same day, isn’t *at all* the same as the scenario RobinRKC posits; it has the feel of a straw man.

The comments also discuss Twitter and how, with hash tags, you can follow tweets about a session without following people (or even joining Twitter).

## Why I Blog

That’s the title of an Andrew Sullivan article in the November 2008 *Atlantic* ([www.theatlantic.com/doc/200811/andrew-sullivan-why-i-blog](http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200811/andrew-sullivan-why-i-blog)). At 5,300 words, the piece would be long for most blog posts (although I’ve read 10,000-word posts), but that’s a good length for a thoughtful essay. A few excerpts and comments:

This form of instant and global self-publishing, made possible by technology widely available only for the past decade or so, allows for no retroactive editing (apart from fixing minor typos or small glitches) and removes from the act of writing any considered or lengthy review. It is the spontaneous expression of in-

stant thought—impermanent beyond even the ephemera of daily journalism. It is accountable in immediate and unavoidable ways to readers and other bloggers, and linked via hypertext to continuously multiplying references and sources. Unlike any single piece of print journalism, its borders are extremely porous and its truth inherently transitory. The consequences of this for the act of writing are still sinking in.

Spontaneous, sometimes—but “impermanent”? That depends. I can cite Jenny Levine from February 2002: “Under the DMCA, librarians are not protected from criminal prosecution for crimes committed by others. There’s just so much wrong with this legislation that we as a profession have to become active participants in the debate.” Karen Schneider from November 2003: “A computer break-in at Bancroft Library (UCB) highlights one of my concerns about RFID: many library servers aren’t secure to begin with—and that, hand in hand with a potent technology such as RFID (full disclosure: I don’t have any indication Bancroft plans to implement RFID), could lead to compromised user privacy.” Jessamyn West from November 1999: “As many of you know, it is my not-so-secret dream to work in a VT library somewhere near my place eventually.” I could go on...

We bloggers have scant opportunity to collect our thoughts, to wait until events have settled and a clear pattern emerges. We blog now—as news reaches us, as facts emerge... [A] blog is not so much daily writing as hourly writing. And with that level of timeliness, the provisionality of every word is even more pressing—and the risk of error or the thrill of presence that much greater.

Simply not true. At least not for many bloggers. “We” don’t all blog on an hourly or even daily basis. Maybe Sullivan feels compelled to “commit thoughts to pixels several times a day”; most of us don’t.

Sullivan says interesting things, even if some of them overgeneralize or make blogging a bit more “revolutionary” than it is. He does exaggerate the power of comments to correct errors in blogs, particularly as more and more high-profile blogs either disallow comments or moderate them. He argues that blogging rewards brevity—“No one wants to read a 9,000-word treatise online”—and agrees with a questionable Matt Drudge statement, that a blog is a broadcast, not a publication. The first statement is largely but not universally true; the second is, I think, wrong—to my mind, blogs *are* publications.

Why *does* Sullivan blog? I’m not sure. “Because he gets paid for it” would be snarky. Maybe you can piece it together from:

Blogging is...to writing what extreme sports are to athletics: more free-form, more accident-prone, less formal, more alive. It is, in many ways, writing out loud...

[A] blog, unlike a diary, is instantly public. It transforms this most personal and retrospective of forms into a painfully public and immediate one. It combines the confessional genre with the log form and exposes the author in a manner no author has ever been exposed before...

From the first few days of using the form, I was hooked. The simple experience of being able to directly broadcast my own words to readers was an exhilarating literary liberation. Unlike the current generation of writers, who have only ever blogged, I knew firsthand what the alternative meant...

Wait. "The current generation" of bloggers "have only ever blogged"? Talk about false generalizations...

Back to Sullivan's "why":

Blogging—even to an audience of a few hundred in the early days—was intoxicatingly free in comparison. Like taking a narcotic. It was obvious from the start that it was revolutionary. Every writer since the printing press has longed for a means to publish himself and reach—instantly—any reader on Earth...

A blog...bobs on the surface of the ocean but has its anchorage in waters deeper than those print media is technologically able to exploit. It disempowers the writer to that extent, of course. The blogger can get away with less and afford fewer pretensions of authority. He is—more than any writer of the past—a node among other nodes, connected but unfinished without the links and the comments and the trackbacks that make the blogosphere, at its best, a conversation, rather than a production...

The role of a blogger is not to defend against this but to embrace it. He is similar in this way to the host of a dinner party. He can provoke discussion or take a position, even passionately, but he also must create an atmosphere in which others want to participate...

There's more. I keep wanting to say "But...That's just not true for all blogs." A good essayist ought to remember that "I" does not mean "we all"; Sullivan should not generalize so frequently and with so little apparent reflection.

For that matter, Sullivan's an odd host. His blog, *The Daily Dish*, does not seem to support comments, an interesting stance for one speaking so favorably of conversation. After glancing through a day's worth of Sullivan's blogging, I see that it's a style I find annoying and not worth following, with lots of brief posts, few of them saying much.

To some extent, I'm nitpicking—and Sullivan is one of those writers who you can find valuable and

thought-provoking even as you occasionally yell. Why Sullivan blogs may not be why I blog or why you should blog (if you should) or why (some) scientists should blog—but it's a tale worth reading.

Still... "Even the most careful and self-aware blogger will reveal more about himself than he wants to in a few unguarded sentences and publish them before he has the sense to hit Delete... You can't have blogger's block. You have to express yourself now, while your emotions roil, while your temper flares, while your humor lasts." Again, false generalizations—Sullivan *should know better*. He seems to think blogs have to be more balanced than print media; one can only say "Wha?" And sometimes he gets it wrong:

A traditional writer is valued by readers precisely because they trust him to have thought long and hard about a subject, given it time to evolve in his head, and composed a piece of writing that is worth their time to read at length and to ponder. **Bloggers don't do this and cannot do this**—and that limits them far more than it does traditional long-form writing. [Emphasis added.]

A blogger will air a variety of thoughts or facts on any subject in no particular order other than that dictated by the passing of time. A writer will instead use time, synthesizing these thoughts, ordering them, weighing which points count more than others, seeing how his views evolved in the writing process itself, and responding to an editor's perusal of a draft or two. The result is almost always more measured, more satisfying, and more enduring than a blizzard of posts.

The liblog field includes counter-examples, some even using editors or at least referees. Sullivan appears to have formed a mental model of blogs, presumably based on his own experience—and ruled the rest of the field out of existence. What Sullivan says may be true for most blogs, maybe even 95% of them—but there are shining examples of blogs that have not "a blizzard of posts" but well-formed, synthesized, *satisfying* essays. There is simply *nothing* about blogs as media (multiple essays on the web appearing in reverse chronological order) that rules out traditional long-form writing or its more frequent 800-word cousin. I would venture a suspicion that more first-rate essays appear in blogs these days than in traditional media; other than *The Atlantic*, *The New Yorker* and a handful of others, the market for essays is a thin one.

Nicholas Carr comments on Sullivan's essay in an October 15, 2008 *Rough type* post ([www.roughtype.com](http://www.roughtype.com)). He notes the assertion that blogging is "a superficial medium" and includes even more of the section beginning "A traditional writer" that I quote above. Carr's reaction? "Well put." None of the commenters



take issue with that limited view of blogs, although Chris K comes close: “If a reader is willing to invest the time to follow postings over time, there is a track record, as well as a pattern of thinking that evolves, much as the personal essayist of the past.”

I’m in the minority on this one—and blogs consisting of true essays are *admittedly* in a small minority (but still they exist). Marcus Banks commented on Sullivan’s essay in an October 25, 2008 *Marcus’ world* post ([mbanks.typepad.com/](http://mbanks.typepad.com/)), wondering about a certain excessive fondness for blogs in the first half and praising the second half:

The old-fashioned essay, in its deliberateness, affords a much greater space for thoughtfulness and profundity than the typical blog musing. In between is the print newspaper column, which comes out frequently enough that profundity is harder...but infrequently enough that there is more time to think clearly.

A worthy blog post will make interesting points, reference the relevant sources, and (hopefully) get a good online conversation brewing. A print newspaper column will not be able to pull together relevant sources as seamlessly, but will encourage deeper reflection because the time pressures aren’t as intense as in the blogosphere. And the slow-bubbling essay will usually be the deepest of the lot.

So that simple principle holds: A place for everything and everything in its place.

Online conversations are unpredictable. This post drew no comments. I continue to assert that blogs can encompass the slow-bubbling essay (*In the library with the lead pipe, anyone?*).

After going through many posts that either just quote portions of Sullivan’s essay or high-five him (with a remarkable paucity of comments), I finally found Scott Rosenberg and “Sullivan’s new blog manifesto” ([www.wordyard.com/2008/10/20/sullivans-new-blog-manifesto/](http://www.wordyard.com/2008/10/20/sullivans-new-blog-manifesto/)):

I think it’s important to say that Sullivan offers blanket declarations about the nature of blogging that really ought to be understood as descriptions of his particular mode of blogging. The picture of blogging Sullivan paints is very much one from the perspective of a writer trained as a print journalist. Nothing wrong with that; I’m in the same boat. But blogging is, as Sullivan says, an enterprise of the individual, and individual experiences are all over the map — many, almost certainly the majority, very different from his, yet no less valid.

Rosenberg also points out a “sloppy error” in Sullivan’s piece, describing *Slate* as “the first magazine published exclusively on the Web,” which is only true if you define “magazine” so narrowly as to exclude

*Salon*, *Feed*, *Hotwired* and *Web Review* (probably “among others”).

There were, of course, more reactions—possibly thousands of them.

## Why Academics Should Blog

The key post with this title is probably Hugh McGuire’s October 26, 2008 post at [hughmcguire.net](http://hughmcguire.net), but I only saw that because of John Dupuis’ identically-titled October 27, 2008 post at the old *Confessions of a science librarian*. ([jdupuis.blogspot.com/](http://jdupuis.blogspot.com/); the new ScienceBlogs version does not yet carry forward the archive).

McGuire, taking a media theory course that involves “a fair bit of reading,” concludes “all academics should blog.” Dupuis quotes his nine key points—but without McGuire’s lovely expansions. I won’t quote them in full, but I’ll include a few of the choice comments...and save my own comments, if any, for the end.

- 1. You need to improve your writing.** I have never read such dismally bad writing as that which is prevalent in academia. Not all of it is terrible, but the stuff that is bad is just atrocious. It’s wordy, flabby, repetitive, and filled with jargony mumbo-jumbo... You need lots of practice writing clear, good prose and saying what you mean. Blogging will help you get that practice.
- 2. Some of your ideas are dumb.** The sooner you get called out on bad ideas, the better. Blogging has an almost-immediate feedback loop...
- 3. The point of academia is to expand knowledge.** If you believe that the reason academics publish is to expand knowledge, then expanding it beyond the few tens or hundreds of your colleagues that read the obscure journals you publish in should be a good thing...
- 4. Blogging expands your readership.** Cross-pollination of ideas makes for a more healthy intellectual ecosystem, and blogging means that anyone, not just those in your discipline, will be likely to read your stuff...
- 5. Blogging protects and promotes your ideas.** By blogging a new idea, you put your stakes in the (cyber)ground, with dates and readership to attest to your claim...
- 6. Blogging is Reputation.** In blogging links are currency: your reputation is made by who links to you and how often. It’s a built in, and more-or-less democratic system of reputation as defined by interest...
- 7. Linking is better than footnotes...** It allows your readers to visit your source material immediately (assuming it too is online), so again is likely to expand knowledge by giving readers direct access to the ideas that underpin your ideas.

## 8. Journals and blogs can (and should) coexist...

If academics blog, they can evolve and develop a series of ideas. When the ideas are clearer and polished, they can move on to be journal articles...

**9. What have journals done for you lately?** Journals define your reputation, and don't pay anything. That's like blogging. They are exorbitantly expensive, have abusive and restrictive copyright terms, and are not available online to the general public. You can't link to them, and often you can't find them. That's unlike blogging...

A few quibbles come to mind (as a non-academic, I will steer clear of the first one entirely). "Few tens or hundreds" describes the readership of most blogs; while blogging *may* expand an academic's readership, that's not a given, any more than it's a given that anyone outside the specialty will care. I'll pass on #6, although that one has problems, and on #9 will note that many journals (particularly in the humanities) are *not* exorbitantly expensive.

None of which erases the value of this list. Some commenters seconded his notions. One took issue with #5 (because you can change the time stamp on a post) and #6 ("most scholars don't really care about scholarly blogs"). The comment stream is fascinating if sometimes frustrating—and includes an *approving* assertion at one point that "academics don't write in order to be understood." What an interesting statement, given that it's apparently not intended as criticism!

Here's what Dupuis has to say about the list:

What I love about the list is that it so perfectly captures the full range of reasons for academics to blog. And not just academics and academic librarians—I would say that the reasons more-or-less apply just as much to any knowledge worker or professional, librarians and library school students included, where the idea is to both share what we know and to build our professional reputations.

In other words, there are both altruistic and selfish reasons to blog, free and open expression benefits both the blogger and the larger social/ professional/ academic context in which she or he blogs.

Is this the *full* range of reasons for professionals to blog? I'm not sure. It's an interesting list, though.

The next few items aren't part of a continuous thread; they're notes on why some professionals (and others) blog.

### *Different types of writing*

Marcus Banks posted this on May 3, 2009 at *Marcus' world* ([mbanks.typepad.com/my\\_weblog/](http://mbanks.typepad.com/my_weblog/)). T. Scott had commented, in relation to something else entirely, that one writer was intent on making every word count.

"That's why so much blog writing is so lousy—people are focused on their ideas, not on the words they use to get those ideas across." Counterpoint to McGuire's #1? Maybe, maybe not. (Maybe most people are just lousy writers, whether they're academics or not.) But here's what Banks has to say (in part):

This made me think, yet again, about the difference between blog writing and more established forms of publication. A few years ago I was very interested in whether blogs would displace traditional news sources; there was excitement in the blogosphere about how this was inevitable, and much hand-wringing in the mainstream media (MSM) about the temerity of those bloggers who wrote late at night in their pajamas.

Today that battle feels ancient. News organizations are under serious threat, but not from bloggers. The inability to make money from online ads is the real culprit...

Harking back to the previous section, Banks now notes Sullivan's essay and the idea that "many posts are less fully formed than they would be as old-fashioned essays." Banks uses the word "many," backing away from Sullivan's generalization, removing any disagreement I might have.

I usually re-read my posts a few times before clicking the magic button. Once a post is up I'll only change something if there is a typo or grammatical error ... or if a phrase seems particularly wordy or pretentious. I try not to tinker too much, grandly reasoning that this random post of mine has become a teeny part of history.

The blog post always represents a slice of time, however carefully it's written. You can grow into essays and take as much time as you need, knowing (of course) that it could always be better.

Well said, and I'm in agreement *for most blogs*. It's certainly true for my own writing, where posts (few and far between as they are) get the least review, *C&I* pieces get more review, true *C&I* essays (many of which have "On" as the first word of their titles)—as opposed to these sections that are piecemeal essays—get even more, and columns for print publications (which are, or should be, essays) get the most. Of course, those columns also have length restrictions—and it's much tougher to write a good 800-word essay than it is to write a pretty good 4,000-word piece.

### *Where I blog, and what I blog for*

Leigh Anne Vrabel's May 11, 2009 post at *Library alchemy* ([libraryalchemy.wordpress.com](http://libraryalchemy.wordpress.com)) makes a distinction between professional blogging and personal blogging and offers her reasons for professional blogging. Excerpts:

**To demonstrate that it can be done...** I wanted to demonstrate to skeptics that it really is possible to keep a professional blog and still get all your other work done. From the day I started until now, I've managed to balance collection development, refdesk time, database stuff, and more meetings than you can shake a very big stick at with, on average, twice-weekly entries...

**To keep track of my professional accomplishments.** Writing and tagging has been really helpful when writing up my self-appraisals, updating my resume, applying for programs like Emerging Leaders, etc...

**To explore things that don't make sense to me...** Writing things out helps me make sense and understand them. Blogging about projects I'm working on, or making observations about other 2.0 issues, has helped me clarify for myself what I need to do now or next in any given situation..

**To become a better writer...** It's simply not enough to have opinions - one must express them artfully if one is to make an impact... If you're going to speak publicly at all, you might as well take the opportunity to hone your craft so that the people who stumble across your work have a better chance of benefiting from it...

**To express an under-represented point of view about Library 2.0...** I started noticing, as I was reading Library 2.0 bloggers, that my experiences and opinions weren't exactly lining up on the same page. So I figured I'd better engage with that. I find myself disagreeing with the "rock star bloggers" more often than not, not to be a pain, but because my experiences here—and those of my peers, and those of our patrons—are often so radically different from what's presented as "normal" that I can't, in all good conscience, NOT say something sometimes...

I'm sure my reasons for blogging will grow and change as my career does...

Read the rest of the post. I see items here that aren't on McGuire's list—and ones that may apply to quite a few professionals, particularly if you generalize the final one. I'm particularly fond of the third reason; posts as a form of public exploration can be both revealing and useful. Some of the essays here are also public explorations in longer form—when you think of it, LIBRARY 2.0 AND "LIBRARY 2.0" was an elaborate attempt to figure out what Library 2.0 meant.

### *why I blog*

Barbara Fister offers a response to a blogging meme in this May 19, 2009 post at *Barbara fister's place* ([barbarafister.wordpress.com](http://barbarafister.wordpress.com)). Excerpts from sections dealing with the "why":

[My] first foray was to replace an irregular library newsletter with a nimbler, more responsive means of

providing information (and avoiding the huge headache of layout and creating content for a newsletter that was, frankly, one newsletter too many for most of its potential audience). Later I started my personal blog for a similar reason: to replace another static web page that was tricky to update, one containing book reviews...

My own blog has evolved into a place where I can integrate the various strands of my life – librarian, academic, novelist, citizen. Another thing about blogging: since discovering FriendFeed I am finding it a wonderfully communal activity.

My personal blog is, for me, a place to work out things that I'm thinking about. There's something about the medium that is nicely informal and immediate, which is a change from the more academic or polished writing that I do elsewhere. I like the bracing logic of an academic argument, and I like writing fiction in someone else's first person voice, but blogging is like having a conversation with a friend.

In that final paragraph (the first sentence, repeated in different form earlier), I see Vrabel's third item expressed differently. It's an excellent reason to blog.

### *19 reasons you should blog and not just tweet*

This one's from way outside liblogs, a May 10, 2009 post at *The FutureBuzz*, "Adam Singer on media | marketing | PR." I won't get into a Twitter-vs.-blogging discussion, but he does offer a few notable items, along with some odd comments like "Blogging is the antithesis of easy," an odd statement for something that takes two minutes to set up and little more time to do. Some of the points:

2. Old articles are valuable and still read years later, given infinite life by the engines.
4. A compelling link in a blog entry will be clicked...
6. You own your work in a self-hosted blog and are in total control over how it is presented.
8. Cumulative results over time from blogging, each post incrementally adds value...
15. These are all just tools to share content and ideas, no more, no less... A blog is the perfect place...if you want focused attention and to build an interested community.

Most of the other notes are more specifically arguments for a blog as home, with Twitter as an outpost. One of those is particularly cogent—"13. 140 characters is often more than necessary - but also it is often less than necessary."

There are lots of comments—including one from a person who's a Twitterer all the way, regards the need to click on a link as too much trouble, and offers this dystopian comment: "Soon enough our needs will

get so great that the thought of reading news in more than [sic] 140 characters will be hard to imagine.” Set aside the key point that many (most?) good blogs are *not* “news,” this is one person who apparently has no use for perspective or even complex thoughts.

*If you don't have a blog you don't have a resume*

That's John Dupuis title for a trio of posts at *Confessions of a science librarian* (the old one) on February 4, 9, and 19, 2009.

The point here is to make the case that blogging is good for your career. It's been good for me and it's been good for a lot of other people and I think it has potential for everyone.

Now, is everyone a blogger-in-waiting? Of course not. Would absolutely everyone actually benefit from blogging? Probably not. And if absolutely everyone did take up blogging, would the massive amount of noise generated actually cancel itself out and end up hardly benefiting anyone at all? Probably.

This is an interesting take on generalization: Blogging might have *potential* for everyone, but that doesn't mean everyone *should* blog.

Dupuis quotes other bloggers, specifically Daniel Lemire, and I think you need to go to Dupuis' posts and continue from there. Dupuis has written a good roundup of his own, adding value through his comments and selections—and, as with most blogs, his posts have live links.

I believe that if you blog to become famous (in other words, to explicitly build your reputation, with cynicism not passion), that will be your reputation. If you blog to share and grow and explore, it's that passion that will hopefully influence your reputation-building efforts and that any concrete benefits that you accrue will reflect that...

Decide for yourself whether or not you could integrate blogging into your own professional development plan. It's definitely worth it for pretty well anyone to at least give it a try. And if you don't have a professional development plan, I have to say that blogging will help you define and refine your goals and interests. Believe it or not, just writing a little about a lot of different things really will help you figure out what's important to you...

I believe that blogging has a lot of benefits for building reputation at the very outset of a career, as it can really help to distinguish one candidate from another...

## Why do You Blog?

Do you find your own motives here? Do you have different reasons?

There's little here about making big bucks from advertising, becoming a rockstar or other dubious rewards for blogging. There's a lot about professional communication and personal growth. This is probably as it should be.

## Interesting & Peculiar Products High-Def Bluetooth?

Not HDTV, in this case, but high-definition audio—digital audio with higher sampling rates and larger word length than standard CD (44.1KHz, 16-bit depth, usually abbreviated 16/44). According to the January 2009 *Stereophile*, Chord Electronics has demonstrated a short-range transmission technique using the Bluetooth 2.4GHz standard capable of 4.5Mb data rates and used to transmit 24/96 stereo audio. The digital protocol is called A2DP and it's already in the chipsets used in most cell phones.

Would you *really* use a cell phone as a storage device for high-definition audio, transmitting it to your high-end stereo system when you want to listen to music? Anything's possible, and high-end data phones have gigabytes of storage, but this may be a little out there. The storage requirements are non-trivial: uncompressed data would appear to require 52.5 megabytes *per minute* of audio, so 8GB of storage would hold less than three hours of music. With true lossless compression, you might get that up to five hours or 312 minutes. It would certainly be a different mindset than packing 8GB of storage with thousands of tunes at such low data rates that there's clear loss of audio quality on any decent headphones.

## iHome Audio iH70SRC

This one's a little mystifying, but maybe it's just me. The product's clear enough: Powered PC speakers that include an iPod dock in the base of one speaker, so you can use them as both iPod speakers and PC speakers. There's even a remote (really? you need a remote control for speakers designed to be used a foot or two away?). But...based on the photo, an iPod Touch covers more than half the right speaker. That seems like a recipe for muted sound that favors the left channel. (As you'd expect for *PC World*, the “tests” consist of casual listening and no testing, resulting in “I found the sound quality to be pretty good, though a bit thin overall,” and there's no indication *at all* of what's in the speakers.) I dunno: Maybe these make sense at \$150. Maybe not.

I investigated, going to the *PC World* review site and from there to the manufacturer. Turns out the extent of specs at the manufacturer's site is 15 watts amplification (I'd guess that's peak power)—and “reson8 speakers” with no mention what size speakers or, for that matter, the size of the units. You gotta love detail like that.

Checking a little further, it turns out that the magazine photo is reversed—the iPod cradle is in the *left* speaker, not the right. Other reviews indicate that the speaker is at the top of each 3.2"x8.5" (7.5" deep) unit, so maybe the iPod doesn't block it—but that also means you've got a single speaker probably around 2.5" in diameter. Hi-fi this ain't. (Checking still more sites, looks like they are indeed 2.5" speakers with “high-fidelity Reson8® speaker chambers,” whatever that might mean.)

## When is a Netbook not a Netbook?

I would argue that a “netbook” that costs \$650 and weighs 3.7 pounds including power brick is really a cheap ultraportable—it's too expensive and too heavy to be a netbook. But Asus calls the NJ10C a netbook—and it has some netbook characteristics, such as the 1.6GHz Atom processor, 1GB of RAM and 160GB hard disk, along with a 10.2" 1024x600 screen. I guess the question is whether, compared to a budget notebook, the lower weight (3.7 pounds as compared to, say, six pounds) and somewhat more compact case balance the slower CPU, somewhat undersized keyboard, less RAM and smaller screen, since you're paying about the same price.

*PC World* uses the title “Not quite a netbook” for a full-page review (April 2009) of Sony's VAIO P, which starts at \$900 and can cost as much as \$1,499. The tested model, with 64GB solid-state storage rather than a hard disk, runs \$1,199, putting it *way* outside the netbook class—and it runs Vista Basic. That seems odd, given its use of a netbook-class 1.33GHz Atom processor. What it *does* have going for it: Size (9.6x4.7x0.9"), weight (1.4lb.), a decent (88% of full-size) keyboard and an 8" widescreen with 1600x768 resolution. Running Vista, benchmark results were pretty awful. This seems more like a UMPC, whatever those are these days—ultralight, ultracompact, also pricey and slow. (The rating is a 68, “Fair.”)

## High-Resolution Downloads

Most early legal audio downloads offered inferior sound quality, although even a couple of years ago some sites offered 256K MP3 or equivalent (still com-

promised, but good enough for many people most of the time).

But what if even full CD quality isn't good enough—as it clearly isn't for some people? There are options. According to the April/May 2009 *Sound & Vision*, there are two main sources for high-resolution music downloads.

MusicGiants offers Super HD High Definition downloads, transferred from SACD and DVD-Audio sources at 88.2kHz/24 bits or 96kHz/24 bits, both potentially substantially better than the 44.1kHz/16 bits of standard CD. Both use Windows Media Audio Lossless encoding and offer 5.1 channel and stereo selections. HDtracks (as with MusicGiants, just add .com for the URL) sells the same resolutions but uses the lossless FLAC format.

Glancing at the sites, I see that MusicGiants (HDGiants on the home page) includes music from all the major publishers and features Music Concierge Collections, \$500 to \$5,000 packages of preselected songs delivered on hard disk. Browsing the download site (which only works on IE—or from Windows Media Player), I see 78 albums as of late May 2009 (mostly jazz and classical), with most album-equivalents priced at \$19.99 and up and none of the one I checked available on a per-song basis.

HDtracks doesn't push big-label affiliations as much and seems to have mostly independent and smaller labels. A late-May check shows just over 300 albums in high-def format (also mostly classical and jazz). A quick check of a couple samples shows some by-song availability (\$2.50 and up) and lower prices for complete albums (but still around \$16).

If you have the ear and audio equipment to appreciate the difference, both may be plausible sources—and both sites have much larger collections of CD-quality downloads.

## More about Streaming Video

The April/May 2009 *Sound & Vision* devotes five pages of a “Tech Trends '09” theme to Ken Pohlmann's breathless coverage of “another paradigm shift,” this time to streaming video. Pohlmann's always been a digital absolutist, so it's no surprise that he says flatly “it will be improvements in streaming that will eventually kill off Blu-ray.” (OK, so Blu-ray *is* digital, but it's delivered on a physical object with all those messy first-sale rights, and anything physical is *so* 20<sup>th</sup> century.) He gives as the biggest factor in deciding whether to skip Blu-ray for streaming: “your tolerance for lower picture quality.”

The only write-ups of streaming video I've seen that *haven't* mentioned picture quality as an issue are those done by people who apparently don't give a damn. Pohlmann doesn't quite avoid the issue, with "not necessarily terrible" being high praise. On the other hand, he confuses two issues (not unusual): He says some streams are at 720p—but without knowing how much excess compression that involves, that tells you nothing. Actually, near the end of the article, he's a little more forthcoming, just after advising us to "test the waters" of streaming. Well, he's only a little more forthcoming on YouTube video quality: "bad on a PC screen and abysmal when blown up on a big-screen TV."

## How Many Channels Will You Install?

Another "Tech Tends '09" story in the April/May 2009 *Sound & Vision* was a tough call: Should I mention it here or in MY BACK PAGES? The story: "Taking you higher," a discussion of 9.1-channel sound systems, adding *height* to the expanded surround sound of 7.1.

Yep. Onkyo's introducing six receivers with Dolby ProLogic IIz technology. The "z" stands for the z axis, height. You put two more speakers above the front left and right speakers, each at least three feet higher.

The writer's enthusiastic. I may not be the right one to comment: Even in our new house, I can see neither any plausible way nor any desire to install a surround-sound system, much less a 7.1 or 9.1 system. Ten speaker cabinets in our living room? *Right...* But for someone with a quarter-million-dollar home theater, it might be just the thing, particularly for gaming.

## Two Terabytes, One Drive

Remember the wait for the first one-terabyte hard disk? It finally arrived in Summer 2007, a few months later than many of us expected. The Hitachi Deskstar 7K1000 cost \$399 when reviewed in July 2007.

Come April 2009—and here's the Western Digital 2TB WD20EADS. It costs \$299. It holds **two** terabytes. It's also environmentally friendly, a relatively low-power device and offers competitive performance. The *PC World* writeup says, "The \$299 price tag may seem high; but at 15 cents per gigabyte, it is fairly competitive with that of other drives." Did I mention that it holds **two terabytes**? That's two thousand gigabytes or *two million* megabytes (accepting the usual hard-disk caveat that two terabytes is probably 2,000,000,000,000 bytes, not 2 times 1024 to the fourth power, which is how you'd specify two terabytes of RAM).

## Editors' Choices and Group Reviews

A December 2008 *PC World* group review calls them "mini-notebooks," a quaint usage for netbooks. (The author offers other synonyms and favors "laptots," but hasn't this particular issue already been settled? If I describe a sub-\$500 portable device with a screen somewhere between 8 and 10 inches, weight not much more than 2 pounds, full keyboard that's a bit undersized and Atom-class CPU...wouldn't you say "netbook"?) It's a rapidly changing category, so even a December 2008 review may be too dated to be very useful, but it's a snapshot of sorts. All five units in the group use Intel's 1.6GHz Atom chip and 1GB RAM and all include Ethernet, Wi-Fi, a Webcam, two or three USB ports and an ExpressCard slot, and none costs more than \$500. They're heavier than some netbooks, ranging from 2.7 to 3.7 pounds (surprisingly, the heaviest is the Asus Eee PC 1000H 80G XP—but it also has the best battery life and a 10" display, as well as "a great keyboard"). Best Buy in the group is the cheapest unit, the \$349 Acer Aspire One.

All-purpose notebooks show up in the April 2009 *PC World*, but the category's getting fuzzy. That said, the Best Buy in the category goes to Acer's \$999 TravelMate 6293, which is light weight (4.8lb.), powerful (2.26GHz Core Duo), small (12.1" screen) and has *great* battery life (just under eight hours). It comes with 2GB RAM and a 250GB hard disk, and includes Bluetooth, Wi-Fi and a webcam.

The same April 2009 *PC World* includes a big roundup of ultraportables or netbooks (the magazine uses mini-notebook, ultraportable and netbook somewhat interchangeably). The price range has broadened (the five top units range up to \$649). This time, the winner is the same Asus Eee PC 1000H 80G XP that was the heaviest in the December 2008 roundup; somehow, the same unit now weighs 3.2lb. The Acer Aspire One also seems relatively unchanged, but it's dropped to third place; apparently the criteria have changed.

"The future belongs to tapeless high-definition camcorders. But the future isn't quite here yet." A December 2008 *PC World* group review covers six high-def camcorders, five using either hard disks or flash drives—and gives the Best Buy award to the single tape unit, Canon's \$1,000 Vixia HV30. MiniDV videotape may not be Shiny, but it's inexpensive, easy to work with, and the camera produces good video—with fewer pixels than most AVCHD (high-def) models but also less compression and better video quality. The best bet for those wanting to avoid tape is the Sony Handycam HDR-SR12, but it's heavier and more expensive.

*Home Theater* does an annual HDTV Face-Off, where a panel compares several HDTVs under proper conditions. This time (as reported in the February 2009 issue), they compared four high-end designs: two 50" plasmas and two 55" LCD sets, both with LED "local-dimming" backlighting (clusters of LEDs that can be dimmed separately to improve black level in images). These are all relatively expensive sets, ranging from \$2,500 to \$7,000. Overall winner: the \$5,000 Pioneer Elite KURO Pro-111FD Plasma HDTV. Second-best performer, but also most expensive: the \$7,000 Sony BRAVIA KDL-55XBR8 LCD HDTV. Amazingly, the Sony had the *deepest* blacks—but, as with most LCD sets, its picture gets a lot worse if you're sitting off to the side. One interesting sidebar shows the power consumption of each set—and it's a shocker, if not really surprising. For a peak white window, the Samsung (LCD) draws 90.5 watts and the Sony 108 watts—while the two plasma sets, with smaller screens, draw 271 and 292 watts respectively, nearly *three times* the power. (For full-white screens, a really tough test, the LCDs draw 139 and 170 watts—and the plasmas draw 419 and an astonishing 585 watts.) So, basically, if you watch TV three hours a day and the white-window consumption is typical, you'll be burning an extra 600 watt-hours a day or 220kWH a year with a big plasma screen. (How significant is that? Well, moving from an old CRT to a big-screen LCD almost certainly *saves* power, while moving to a big-screen plasma may burn more power. In our household, the difference stated would be about 5% of our usage; your mileage may vary. And, to be sure, we don't watch anywhere near 3 hours a day.)

From HDTV to Blu-ray, the way to get the best possible high-def picture. The February/March 2009 *Sound & Vision* tests four reasonably-priced Blu-ray players that support BD-Live, the odd feature that provides for live networking to add to Blu-ray discs. All four list for \$250 to \$350 and all are name brands. Two score well enough for the "certified and recommended" seal: the \$350 Samsung BD-P2550 and \$250 Panasonic DMP-BD35. The Samsung's fairly fast—five seconds to power up and open the disc tray, 23 seconds after insertion to display an image (for regular Blu-ray discs; BD-Live ones with lots of Java can take more than a minute to load). The Panasonic takes 20 seconds to power up, but only about 10 seconds after insertion to play a normal Blu-ray disc.

Speaking of Blu-ray, the April 2009 *PC World* tests ten Blu-ray players costing anywhere from \$175 to \$400. The Best Buy is also the most expensive, Panasonic's \$400 DMP-BD55K. The review's caveat on

most inexpensive units: They do fine with Blu-ray but don't upscale standard DVDs as well as more expensive units. The Samsung BD-P2500 is a close second to the Panasonic and costs \$350; while its images are great, it doesn't decode DTS-HD Master audio directly. That may not matter for most users. If what you want is fast loading of Blu-ray discs, go for the third-place finisher, still one of the best Blu-ray drives: the Sony PlayStation 3. The Panasonic takes about a minute to start playing a disc, the Samsung about 56 seconds—but the PS3 takes 24 seconds from disc load to playing the movie.

*PC World* reviews the "top internet security suites" in a March 2009 report that's considerably longer and more informative than the magazine's usual one-page mini-roundups. Probably no great surprise on the highest score (89 out of 100): Norton Internet Security 2009. Second place: BitDefender Internet Security 2009.

## Perspective On Privatization

**Privatization:** The noun formed from **privatize**.

**Privatize.** Merriam-Webster's *Tenth Collegiate* keeps it simple: "to make private; *esp.* to change (as a business or industry) from public to private control or ownership."

*Wiktionary* defines privatization as "The transfer of a company or organization from government to private ownership and control." Privatize? "To release government control of a business or industry to private industry."

*Wordnet* defines privatize as "change from governmental to private control or ownership."

Answers.com adds a second meaning: "The transition from a publicly traded and owned company to a company which is privately owned and no longer trades publicly on a stock exchange. When a publicly traded company becomes private, investors can no longer purchase a stake in that company."

Other than that secondary meaning, it all seems fairly straightforward, doesn't it? When you change a business or industry—say rail travel, postal service and the like—from public ownership to private ownership (or maybe control), that's privatization.

Paul Starr doesn't think it's simple. His paper "The meaning of privatization" in the *Yale Law and Policy Review* begins "Privatization is a fuzzy concept that evokes sharp political reactions." Indeed, he manages to bring up a whole bunch of fuzzy forms:

the “privatization of emotion,” for example. One note may be relevant to this discussion:

Privatization can also signify another kind of withdrawal from the whole to the part: an appropriation by an individual or a particular group of some good formerly available to the entire public or community.

Starr offers two primary meanings for privatization in late-20<sup>th</sup>-century political discussion:

(1) any shift of activities or functions from the state to the private sector; and, more specifically, (2) any shift of the production of goods and services from public to private.

He clearly finds the second, narrower definition more useful. (Among other things, converting from the US Post Office, a government organization, to USPS, a public corporation, was *not* privatization in that narrower sense.)

I could go on—but let’s stop with the Universal Source of Wisdom & Truth. Here’s what *Wikipedia* has to say in the first paragraph on Privatization, before covering the stock-company definition (and a related situation, converting a mutual or cooperative to a stock company):

Privatization is the incidence or process of transferring ownership of a business, enterprise, agency or public service from the public sector (government) to the private sector (business). In a broader sense, privatization refers to transfer of any government function to the private sector including governmental functions like revenue collection and law enforcement.

### *Dr. H. Dumpty’s Theory of Language*

As far as I can determine, the mainstream version of American (and English in general) has a fairly straightforward meaning for privatization—even after it’s been enhanced by lawyers.

There is, of course, an alternate view, as expounded by a learned linguist in a book by the noted logician Charles Dodgson (published under a pseudonym):

‘When I use a word,’ Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, ‘it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less.’

‘The question is,’ said Alice, ‘whether you can make words mean so many different things.’

‘The question is,’ said Humpty Dumpty, ‘which is to be master—that’s all.’

Consider me the old-fashioned Alice in this scenario—and a surprising number of people as proponents of the H. Dumpty theory, that words mean whatever you assert they mean.

In DumptyWorld, it’s fair to say that the Google Library Project privatizes the collections of publicly-

owned libraries—for, after all, each of those words means *whatever you choose it to mean*. (“Privatizes the collections of publicly-owned libraries” could just as easily mean “Offers jam tomorrow and jam yesterday, but no jam today”: The question is which is to be master—that’s all.) In traditional English, I believe it’s not only unfair, it’s an abuse of the language.

## Background

Siva Vaidhyanathan has been using “privatization” to describe the Google Library Project since at least 2006. I have never found the usage reasonable, nor his arguments for it convincing. Of course, he’s certainly not the only academic to use “privatization” loosely, either with regard to Google or in other cases.

I’ll posit a definition for this NewSpeak version of “privatization”:

**Privatization:** Creating something of value in the private sector based on public resources, *without* destructive or exclusive use of those public resources, that may preclude something similar being created in the public sector in the future, even though no such thing currently exists.

Brewster Kahle has used a NewSpeak version of “privatization” since at least 2007. I had this to say in a *Walt at random* post on October 22, 2007:

First, there’s “privatization.”

Here’s the quote (from an article that’s appeared in NYT and IHT):

“Google could be privatizing the library system by offering a large, but private interface to millions of books,” Kahle said.

Brewster Kahle’s certainly not the only one to misuse the language this way—just the latest.

I’m not in love with Google by any means. I think OCA is a great idea (although I wonder where the “alliance” has gone, given Yahoo’s almost-total silence and Microsoft’s diverging effort).

But “privatizing the library system” or, which I’ve also read, “privatizing the public domain”—I’m sorry, but horsepucky.

If Google negotiated exclusive contracts, maybe.

Otherwise, that language is like saying that, if I check a book out from my library that happens to be in the public domain, scan it, and return it to the library, I’ve “privatized” the book.

Google is borrowing books from libraries (in large quantities thanks to special arrangements), scanning those books, and returning them to the libraries with the promise that the books won’t be damaged. Its deals are nonexclusive. Google’s scan does not in any way modify the terms under which the book itself can be used.



Google Book Search absolutely expands findability for books and in no way restricts anyone else from building and maintaining book-search systems. Google Book Search for public domain absolutely expands access to the text within books, and in no way restricts anyone else from providing similar access. (For that matter, Google's silly first-page "conditions" are suggestions for use of their PDFs, not legal restrictions.)

How can expansion be viewed as contraction? How can improved access be regarded as privatization?

Want to attack Google? Fine. But is it necessary to debase the English language to do so? Or does it just make a great soundbite?

When Karen Coyle used the same language in one of her many (generally very useful) posts about the proposed Google/AAP/AG settlement, I took exception, as part of PERSPECTIVE: THE GOOGLE BOOKS SEARCH SETTLEMENT (*Cites & Insights* 9:4, March 2009).

I planned to say nothing about the proposed settlement for several months after that special issue—probably until the settlement had been approved, modified or denied, or at least until we know more about things like pricing for access to the collection. Meanwhile, I have more than three dozen items flagged for review in a later discussion.

I *still* plan to hold off on another general commentary until the dust has settled—but Karen Coyle's reaction to my comments makes the situation more interesting. Three months after *Cites & Insights* 9:4 appeared, Coyle wrote a detailed response in her blog. When I was able to devote time and attention, I responded to her post.

Her post—*quoted in full and unchanged* as feedback to *Cites & Insights*—follows, as does my later post and some of the comments on that post.

## Walt Crawford should read the document

[Originally appeared as a May 10, 2009 post on Coyle's *InFormation*. Specific link: [kcoyle.blogspot.com/2009/05/walt-crawford-should-read-document.html](http://kcoyle.blogspot.com/2009/05/walt-crawford-should-read-document.html). Links appear as underlined text.]

In his March, 2009 *Cites & Insights*, Walt Crawford does a roundup of comments on the Google/AAP settlement, and gets very agitated when reviewing some of my posts. I'm used to that. But agitation tends to cancel out reason, and Walt gets some things wrong that he might have understood better if he had kept a clear head.

In response to my criticism that Google is digitizing without regard to collection building, Walt says:

"I don't know of any big academic library or public library that's a single disciplinary collection—or, realistically, a set of well-curated collections."

I'd like to hear from academic librarians on this one. My understanding was that an academic library is INDEED a set of well-curated collections.

Walt:

"I don't remember public universities admitting to substantial costs in cooperating with Google."

What's the cost? Dan Greenstein estimated \$1-2 per book. Cheap, but still considerable for a library scanning millions of books. The cost is primarily in staff time, shelving and reshelving books. Under this agreement, there is also the cost of meeting the security requirements that are imposed. (That's in Appendix D) These requirements, which are possibly quite reasonable, will have a greater cost than what most libraries do today for digital materials, and will be one of the primary reasons why some libraries do not contract to receive copies of the digitized items. (Note that some of the potential library partners are working hard to collaborate on the Hathi Trust, which does appear to meet the standards of the agreement; others, however, have decided that they will not attempt to store digital copies.)

In a post I argued that had libraries gone ahead and digitized their own collections (for the purposes of indexing and searching), that this probably would have been considered fair use.

Walt:

"Well...this is not a judicial finding. I find it unfortunate that Google didn't fight the good fight, and I think it will make things much harder for another commercial entity to attempt similar digitization and use—but I don't see that library use of "their own materials" has changed in any way."

Not of their hard copy materials, but legal minds think that this changes the landscape for digitization and the use of digitized materials, even closing some options that might have been available before.

"The proposed settlement agreement would give Google a monopoly on the largest digital library of books in the world. It and BRR, which will also be a monopoly, will have considerable freedom to set prices and terms and conditions for Book Search's commercial services.... If asked, the authors of orphan books in major research libraries might well prefer for their books to be available under Creative Commons licenses or put in the public domain so that fellow researchers could have greater access to them. The BRR will have an institutional bias against encouraging this or considering what terms of access most authors of books in the corpus would want." Pam Samuelson

And to my statement:

"The digitization of books by Google is a massive project that will result in the privatization of a public good: the contents of libraries. While the libraries will still be there, Google will have a de facto monopoly on the online version of their contents."

Walt first prefaces it with:

"I take issue with the very first sentence, as I've taken issue consistently with the same claim by others with even higher profiles than Coyle (who are even less likely to ever admit they could be mistaken)."

Well, it would have been nice if he had said who they are. But thanks for letting me know that you consider me a "lower profile" person, Walt. He goes on to say:

"Nonsense. Sheer, utter nonsense. The libraries and contents will still be there. OCA will still be there. I'm sorry, but this one just drives me nuts: It's demonization of the worst kind and an abuse of the language."

Well, I'm not sure how this abuses language, but there is general agreement that Google gets a monopoly... at least on out-of-print books, which is the vast majority of books in libraries. (Not on public domain books, which is what the OCA digitizes, but anyone can digitize public domain books.) So although the libraries and their contents will still be there, and can be used in hard copy as they are today, no one but Google can digitize the in-copyright works without incurring liability. So "monopoly on online version of their contents" is a factual statement, if you understand that public domain is public domain. (Note, this settlement agreement is extremely complex, with some real zingers hidden in its 134 pages. It's not possible to cover it all in a blog post, so anyone who is interested really needs to read the document itself, painful as that process is.)

In terms of preservation and longevity concerns, Walt asks:

"Won't the fully-participating libraries have digital copies? I can't think of institutions with better longevity."

To begin with, only fully participating libraries will have digital copies, and we don't yet know how many libraries will choose that option. Other libraries, even those that are only allowing Google to digitize public domain books, do not get to keep copies of the digital files. (Not only that, public domain libraries that have been cooperating with Google have to delete all of their copies of the files that they hold today, as per this agreement. See Appendix B-3.) The only party with copies of all of the files will be Google.

There are statements in the settlement about what happens if Google "fails to meet the Require Library

Services Requirement" or simply decides not to continue. I refer you to page 84 of the settlement, and hope that someone can make sense out of it. The way I read it, libraries can then engage a third-party provider, who will receive the files from Google.

The key thing here is that even in the event of the failure of Google, libraries are not allowed to make uses of their own scans, such as those that are permitted to Google by this settlement. The restriction to "computational uses" and some other minor uses stands, even in that eventuality.

When I say:

"Google should be required to carry all digital Books without discrimination and without liability."

Walt replies:

"You mean "all digital books that Google's scanned"? I suspect Google wouldn't argue with this."

That is exactly what I mean, and Google does indeed argue with it. As a matter of fact, the settlement only obligates Google to provide access to at least 85% of the books it scans. That "access" refers to the subscription service that will be available to libraries and other institutions. The settlement says:

"Google may, at its discretion, exclude particular Books from one or more Display Uses for editorial or non-editorial reasons." p.36

That's followed by an affirmation of the "value of the principle of freedom of expression," which I must say rings a bit hollow in this context. Google has to notify the Registry if it has excluded a book, and to provide a digital copy of that book to the Registry. The Registry can then seek out a third party to provide services for excluded books. Here, however, is James Grimmelmann's concern on that front:

"The second is that no one besides the Registry might ever find out that Google has chosen to delist a book. If the Registry doesn't or can't engage a replacement for Google, the book would genuinely vanish from this new Library of Alexandria. Perhaps that should happen for some books, but decisions like that shouldn't be made in secret. When Google chooses to exclude a book for editorial reasons, it should be [R13] required to inform the copyright owner and the general public, not just the Registry. "

What might Google exclude? Perhaps very little, but at the ALA panel in Denver in January, 2009, Dan Clancy of Google gave an off-the-cuff remark that, as I recall, had the word "pornography" in it. Given the recent embarrassment of Amazon when it had to face the fact that many of its best sellers are rather salacious in nature, I can imagine Google also developing concern about the visibility of the texts that make us uncomfortable.

There are a lot of legitimate reasons for concern about this proposed settlement. And I don't think that anything that I have said is "nonsense."

## Responding as politely as possible

[Originally appeared May 23, 2009 on *Walt at Random*. Specific link [walt.lishost.org/2009/05/responding-as-politely-as-possible/](http://walt.lishost.org/2009/05/responding-as-politely-as-possible/) Links appear as underlined text.]

Karen Coyle posted "Walt Crawford should read the document" on May 10, 2009 on her blog, *Coyle's Information*.

Note two things about that sentence:

1. It includes a direct link to Coyle's post.
2. I include the name of Coyle's blog correctly, spelling and all.

Now consider the first paragraph of Coyle's post, reproduced here exactly as it appears:

In his March, 2009 *Cites & Insites*, Walt Crawford does a roundup of comments on the Google/AAP settlement, and gets very agitated when reviewing some of my posts. I'm used to that. But agitation tends to cancel out reason, and Walt gets some things wrong that he might have understood better if he had kept a clear head.

No link—but then, how could there be a link, since there's no such publication as "Cites & Insites"? (I don't regard "Insites" as a word and assuredly would not use it for an ejournal.)

The March 2009 *Cites & Insights* (volume 9, number 4) consists of an essay on a proposed settlement involving Google, AAP, and the Authors Guild (not just Google and AAP). I regard that essay as considerably more than "a roundup of comments."

I'm not sure whether Ms. Coyle is used to people *in general* getting agitated when reviewing her posts or whether that's specifically aimed at me, but the last sentence is unquestionably aimed at somebody named Walt Crawford.

The suggestion that I was unable to reason clearly because I was so agitated by Ms. Coyle's comments is either insulting or patronizing; your choice. It's also false. (I checked the indexes for *Cites & Insights*. Except for March 2009, every time I've quoted or commented on Karen Coyle it's been entirely positive comment—so I have to assume that other people get agitated by her comments. That's not necessarily a bad thing.)

There is an ornithologist named Walt Crawford in the Midwest, director of the World Bird Sanctuary. In the overall scheme of things, that Walt Crawford (we have the same middle initial, but I'm not a "Jr.") is probably more important to the world than I am—but he has a somewhat lower web profile. I'm pretty sure we're both members of the Nature Conservancy... Still, I doubt

very much that St. Louis' Walt Crawford has a publication named *Cites & Insites* or that he wrote about the proposed Google Book Search settlement.

Still...there's enough wrong with Ms. Coyle's first paragraph (in a post that appeared nearly three months after the essay in question) that it's tempting to leave it at that. If Coyle can't be bothered to link to the essay being criticized or name the publication properly, and if she finds it necessary to patronize me in the post title and the lead paragraph, why should I take her comments seriously? (She knows how to do links: there are two links in the post. I can only assume that the decision not to link to my essay is deliberate.)

[Why did it take me two weeks to respond? Anyone who's followed this blog or my FriendFeed feed knows: Since May 10, I've been spending nearly all my energy moving to a new house—and from May 14 through May 18, I didn't have internet access. Also, I recognized right off the bat that a hasty response was a bad idea.]

### *A quick exercise*

Before reading this response further, you should read the commentary. If you haven't already done so, I suggest reading the whole essay (including but not limited to "Putting on several hats" on pp. 4-5)—but since I'm being charged with agitation and loss of reason, you could focus on pages 20-25. Consider particularly the language in "Google/AAP settlement" (pp. 20-21) with its "**Ping!**" refrain and the right-hand column on p. 21 (from "...this is the pact with the devil" through "**THIS IS EVIL**").

If, after reading the extensive quotations from Coyle and my brief interspersed comments, you find that Coyle is consistently cool and logical whereas I've gone off the deep end and gotten things wrong, then it may not be worth your while to read the rest of this.

But as I reread it, twice, I see no agitation on my part, and less rhetorical fervor in my notes than in some of Coyle's commentary. Maybe Coyle wasn't agitated in those posts, but it certainly reads that way—or is it that Coyle is allowed to be agitated but I'm not?

### *Specific objections...*

What of my comments does she object to?

#### **All libraries as well-curated collections**

In questioning the need for Google to digitize based on deliberate collection-building, I say "I don't know of any big academic library or public library that's a single disciplinary collection—or, realistically, a set of well-curated collections." (Coyle omits the italics in "any." No biggie.)

Coyle says "an academic library is INDEED a set of well-curated collections."

Really? Good academic libraries include well-curated collections, but I'll suggest that most big ones contain a lot of materials outside that set of collections, particularly for libraries using lots of standing orders and approval plans. [OK, I spent too many years at UC Berkeley. If anyone suggests to me that the Doe Library is entirely a set of well-curated collections, I'd probably snigger, much as I love and respect the library.]

But that's a matter of definition—what constitutes “well-curated”? I could have simply taken issue with Coyle's lead sentences in the paragraph in question:

So the main reason why Google Books is not a library is that it isn't what we would call a “collection.” The books have not been chosen to support a particular discipline or research area...

Even if I overstated “any,” Coyle's implicit definition of “library” here excludes an enormous number of libraries. If Coyle wants to say that “Google Books is not a research library,” I probably wouldn't object—but “research library” and “library” are not synonymous.

#### **Library costs**

I said “I don't remember public universities admitting to substantial costs in cooperating with Google.”

Coyle says “Dan Greenstein estimated \$1-2 per book”—and offers a link.

The article linked to says no such thing. It says that Greenstein estimated Google's scanning costs at \$1 or \$2 per volume. [Here's the link](#): read it for yourself. (It's a Daily Cal article. Depending how you read it, Greenstein might have been estimating a cost for cooperating with Google elsewhere in the article, but certainly not as quoted by Coyle—and, frankly, I can't be sure just what the article is saying about the UC costs of the Google project. In any case, it wouldn't have been an admission: This article appeared before UC joined the project. It would have been a forward estimate.)

I'll stand by my statement: I don't remember public universities admitting to substantial costs in cooperating with Google. (The first three words represent a caveat—maybe somebody somewhere said it and I don't remember or never saw it. Greenstein did not say it, at least not as quoted from the cited article.)

#### **Changing library use of libraries' own material**

Adding one brief paragraph to a long Coyle quotation, I asserted that nothing in the proposed agreement changes the ways libraries use their own material.

That's a *factual statement*. Coyle's criticism:

Not of their hard copy materials, but legal minds think that this changes the landscape for digitization and the use of digitized materials, even closing some options that might have been available before.

She quotes one such legal mind. Is there unanimity or overwhelming consensus? I don't know (although

I'm pretty nearly certain that there isn't)—but it's irrelevant to my simple, factual statement.

#### **Privatization, profiles and abusing the language\***

Coyle said in one of her original posts that “The digitization of books by Google is a massive project that will result in the privatization of a public good: the contents of libraries.”

I objected to that sentence, “as I've taken issue consistently with the same claim by others with even higher profiles than Coyle (who are even less likely to ever admit they could be mistaken).” Coyle takes me on for not making the “higher profile” people and adds this: “But thanks for letting me know that you consider me a ‘lower profile’ person, Walt.”

**What?** If I say Barack Obama has a higher profile than Rick Boucher, I'm not saying Rick Boucher is “a lower profile person”—except by comparison. If you want names, there's Brewster Kahle and Siva Vaidyanathan—and yes, I do consider them higher profile. (Based on Coyle's post that I'm commenting on here, however, I withdraw the parenthetical clause in my comment.)

I went on to say the “privatization” claim was “**Non-sense**. Sheer, utter nonsense. The libraries and contents will still be there. OCA will still be there. I'm sorry, but this one just drives me nuts: It's demonization of the worst kind and an abuse of the language.”

Coyle's response?

There is general agreement that Google gets a monopoly...at least on out-of-print books.

Based on this “general agreement” she says the claim of monopoly “is a factual statement.” I haven't seen any sort of unanimity on this claim, and I wasn't aware that consensus constituted fact—but in any case, that has nothing to do with the wording I objected to: “privatization of a public good: the contents of libraries.”

Did Ansel Adams privatize the great views in Yosemite by taking photos that are so iconic they've made it difficult for anyone else to do as well? Obviously not; he created something by using a public good, and in doing so enhanced the public good (making Yosemite more popular).

If I go to a library, check out some books, and create something new based on those books, it would be nonsense to say I'd privatized the contents of the library. If I built an index by going through each book, and then returned the books, it would be nonsense to say I'd privatized the contents of the library.

How is Google's project different? The books are on the shelves, **at least** as accessible as they were before Google scanned them...and realistically a lot more accessible.

The public good is not *in any way* diminished or privatized. If a **possible future extension of the public good** is less likely because Google has a first-mover advantage or because the language of the settlement gives them advantageous treatment, that's a very different thing.

### Preservation and longevity

Discussing issues of preservation and longevity, I said:

Won't the fully-participating libraries have digital copies? I can't think of institutions with better longevity.

Here's how Coyle begins her refutation of my comment:

To begin with, only fully participating libraries will have digital copies...

Since Coyle agrees that "fully participating libraries will have digital copies," there's really no point in going further. (If I say "All Honda Insights are hybrids" and someone begins a critique of that statement by saying "To begin with, only Honda Insights—among Hondas—are always hybrids"—there's little point in continuing the discussion.)

### ...without discrimination and without liability

Here's one where I may be wrong. I assumed Google wouldn't argue with the idea of carrying all scanned books.

Coyle points out that the settlement does not oblige them to do so. Since this is the single case in which she's asserting I would have gotten it right if I'd read the full 134-page settlement, I assume this is the genesis for the post's title.

If we assume that Google was 100% responsible for the language of the settlement (**which I do not**) then I'm clearly wrong here. **Let's assume that I am.**

**I've been wrong before**, I'll be wrong again. If Coyle had pointed out this single case in a more temperate manner, I'd be delighted to include that in an update to the essay as a useful correction and expansion.

### *There are legitimate reasons for concern about the settlement*

That's what Coyle says.

I agree. I say so repeatedly in the [March 2009 Cites & Insights](#).

If that wasn't the case, I wouldn't have produced a 30-page issue: A one-paragraph note would have been sufficient. I *certainly* wouldn't have guided people back to Coyle's posts.

Coyle doesn't think that anything she has said is "nonsense." Sorry, but I have to disagree. The "privatization" line is nonsense—just as it's always been when Prof. Vaidhyanathan uses it, just as it is when Brewster Kahle uses it. It's an abuse of the English

language, and by demonizing Google it gets in the way of improving the settlement and the situation.

Frankly, if it hadn't been for the tone of Coyle's post and her accusation that I'd lost a clear head, I might not have written this post at all. Coyle has provided valuable service over the years in analyzing the Google Books project and the proposed settlement.

**\*Postscript:** The comments on this post include various defenses of "privatization" as an accurate and appropriate term. They make interesting reading, and I urge readers of this post to read all of the comments—and decide for yourself. (I'll probably prepare a commentary in a future *C&I*, incorporating most or all of this post and its comments.)

I still regard "privatization of public goods" as an abuse of the language as used for anything in the proposed settlement. When you create something new based on public goods, leaving the public goods intact, I can't find that to be privatization as I understand the word.

But I should also clarify that it's not Karen Coyle's coinage or distinctive usage—if I'm saying it's nonsense on her part, I'm also saying it's nonsense on the part of Siva Vaidhyanathan, Brewster Kahle and probably quite few others. Which, to be sure, I am.

It's a shame that an argument over books uses the language so sloppily—but "privatization of public goods" has a distinctive harshness to it that more accurate terms might not.

This postscript does not attempt to cut off the discussion of the term. I think it's a fascinating discussion. Do note that I regard comments here to be bound by the same CC license as the blog itself, meaning I can (and will) quote them in their entirety in [Cites & Insights](#)—and, of course, that anyone else can quote them for noncommercial use.

About the only thing I would add here has to do with the treatment of "monopoly" as fact rather than assertion, or the claim that there's general agreement. At least based on what I've seen in the press, Paul Cournant *explicitly* denies that the proposed settlement grants Google a monopoly. I'm nearly certain there are other informed parties who also disagree with the sources Coyle quotes. In any case, it is overreaching to call it a factual statement; it's a claim or an opinion.

### *Comments on the post*

In general, I'm reproducing comments (and my responses) exactly as received. I've omitted pseudonymous and anonymous comments.

*Siva Vaidhyanathan, May 24, 2009:*

Hi Walt,

I just thought I would weigh in on the privatization question. I see that you and Karen are in the midst of a

heated argument. I don't need to speak to every point of what seems at this time to be one of diction and manners. I respect both of y'all very much. So I hope I can push the argument beyond its current domain.

To be clear: the privatization indictment does not fall on Google. Google is private. It does what is good for it. Google is not the problem here.

The privatization accusation is one that bears on the university libraries that have — for the most part — given away millions if not billions of dollars worth of collections to a private entity with no clear return and at great risk of liability. The libraries are committing self-privatization. That has two levels: the terms of the original deals with Google and the new vending machine proposal that comes from the settlement.

This whole project is gross corporate welfare. The currency at stake is a non-rivalrous good. So it's not like federal subsidies to Agribusiness. It's of a lower scale and stake. But it's welfare nonetheless. The system profits Google and Google alone. The libraries see little or no benefit from the deal. So let me explain what I mean by that.

You raised a strong rebuttal: Google as patron. Let's say I walk in to a library. Use the collections. Check books out. Make copies of some of the content. Then I set about creating something new that relies on that content that I sell on the market. That's in fact what I do with the books I write. Good enough.

How is Google different? No patron taxes or binds libraries like Google has.

First, when I use a library I do not tie up the staff time of dozens of employees for years at a time (at least I hope I don't). This is happening at every Google partner library. I do not make librarians sign non-disclosure agreements that prevent them from discussing the pros, cons, and costs of the my use with the public (or even their own faculty). My use of the library is compensated by the taxpayers of the Commonwealth of Virginia and by the fees my students pay. Google, in contrast, "pays" directly for this windfall through an illegal barter arrangement by which it agrees to make low-quality wholesale copies of millions of books (that Google chooses, thus not necessarily serving the interests of the library).

Why is it illegal? Well, because of the un-litigated and thus unsettled copyright infringement issue: Google is transferring copies as payment for a commercial transaction. Nothing in Sec. 107 Or 108 or any case relying on these sections grants a right to make copies of copyrighted works and transfer them as payment. Nothing in the settlement prevents publishers from suing universities if they don't like how universities are using the material. That's such a scary prospect that many Google partners — including my employer — have declined to download these images

from Google's servers. University lawyers are rightly alarmed at the liability prospects. So for many universities it's worse than a something-for-nothing prospect. It's a loss. They lose staff time, lawyer time, and books from circulation for weeks at a time. Yet they get nothing.

Now, I am willing to say at this point that if Hathitrust flowers into what its visionary leaders predict, I am willing to withdraw many if not all of these concerns.

Let's remember that the UC system deal and the Michigan deal are the exceptions within the Google Book Search universe. These universities negotiated better terms for themselves early on. Michigan is still cutting better deals even now (see <http://www.wired.com/epi-center/2009/05/umich-gets-better-deal-in-googles-library-of-the-future-project/>) The rest of the libraries are finally coming around to realizing what a bad deal this was for them and the extent to which they were scammed. Harvard did not back out just because Bob Darnton likes the smell of books. He dislikes the smell of the contract he inherited from the Larry Summers regime. I have heard clandestinely that a number of other partners are considering terminating their deals if they are not substantially renegotiated.

The second part of the privatization is the vending-machine model of delivery that Google is pushing on libraries through the settlement. Libraries will for the first time have little bookstores inside of them. That's bad enough. But libraries will have no recourse if Google overcharges for the service or (more likely) puts onerous terms on the use of the material. That's blatant privatization of public library space. Now, I'm no purist. And I recognize the value of hot-dog vendors in Central Park. But this has not been part of a process by which the libraries have been invited to the table or been able to stand up for traditional values of librarianship: free and open access; user privacy and confidentiality; preservation; a public space free of commercial influence; etc.

So while the word "privatization" is unsubtle and imperfect, it's relevant and important in public discourse about this project that will have tremendous impact on the future of libraries and the public sphere. I use it because I have to pop the bubble of perception that Google works for us. And I use it because I have since 2004 wanted libraries to see that Google does not work for them. Google works for its shareholders — as it should be. We as citizens and members of the library community have not been as critical or vigilant as we should have been. And sometimes strong words like that serve the purpose of waking people up and pulling them into the conversation. The fact that criticisms of Google Book Search and the settlement have grown louder and wider in recent years is evidence of the value of such tactics.

Privatization is not a boolean quality. It has gradations. If I can't convince you to see this massive project of text-giving by public libraries to one of the world's most successful and aggressive corporations as part of the process of privatization, so be it.

Brewster, Karen, and I are hardly naive about the steady privatization of library services through expensive vendors etc. Brewster, after all, made his killing through the private sector in the first place. But we all recognize the virtue in minimizing the influence of private interests within and among public institutions — especially libraries.

Oh, and BTW, OCA will not necessarily be around forever. It depends on philanthropy. And philanthropists don't like to duplicate what the private sector is already doing. Moreover, if the settlement goes through OCA will not be able to compete at the level of full-text availability for most of the books of the 20th century. So there is no point even comparing them. And I think we all have to consider the pressures that non-librarian boards and administrators put on libraries to reduce their collections whenever there is a potential "alternative" to the physical item. And Google is just that sort of poor substitute for the original. I wish I were as confident as you that the OCA will be part of the mix 20 years from now. I think a bigger danger, however, is that Google either goes bust or transforms into something very different. What if its board in 2020 decides the book project is a money-loser. What then?

These are serious issues, even if you don't want to traffic in terms like "privatization." I know that you get that and I value your contribution to their consideration.

So what do you want to see next? What should libraries do in the case the settlement is approved? What should they do if the court rejects the settlement or the Feds pursue anti-trust action against Google?

I have some big ideas. I would love to hear yours.

#### *Walt Crawford, May 24*

Thanks for the detailed comment. No, you haven't convinced me that "privatization of public goods" is a reasonable term for what you say is going on. But you state the case well.

I don't expect to be contributing Big Ideas in this particular area. There are plenty of others more qualified to do so. I'm mostly commenting and synthesizing, in this case as in many others. (I've never been a "public intellectual," and at age 64 I may lack the drive to become one.)

I certainly agree that these are serious issues. I think serious issues deserve clear language, and I continue to think "privatization" is so unclear as to muddy the issues in general. But I've said that before, and may be getting repetitious with it. I'll let it go at that.

#### *Jim Carlile, May 24*

I think where the idea of "privatization" does come in is when considering the possibility that libraries will weed their collections in response to the online Google corpus. If they start trashing old "duplicate" PD works— which many public libraries will indeed do— this means that Google has effectively privatized the public domain for many users.

Academic research libraries may not be as willing to discard their books, but some will, at least a part of their collection. The political pressures will be too great.

This will give Google a very real monopoly on access. Factor in the profit potential of these "Google machines" and it's very likely that the only way you're going to get ahold of many books in the future is through the Google.

#### *Walt Crawford, May 25*

I must have missed something here, as my understanding is that the settlement wouldn't change the status of scanned public domain works at all—they can be downloaded and reused freely. Even if research libraries took the unprecedented step of tossing out their PD collections (is Harvard really going to abandon pre-1924 books? Are there political pressures on the many private ARL libraries to toss out stuff that Google's scanned? Really?), I don't see any probability that the only point of access to PD books could be Google. I thought the whole "privatization" argument had to do with the majority of the scanned books, which are out of print but still covered by copyright.

Apart from that, this is a series of speculations about what might happen—at best a slender rationale for, say "potential privatization through inattention."

#### *Eric Hellman, May 25*

Walt: Looking at the language used in this discussion, I'd have to say that your characterization of Karen's "privatization" claim as "nonsense" is inaccurate. It may sound odd to describe publishers who sell copyrighted translations of "Romeo and Juliet" as "privatizing Shakespeare," but it's not nonsense.

Perhaps the most interesting thing about the use of the word "privatization" is that strictly speaking, the works covered by the settlement agreement are all "private" under US copyright law. In fact, opponents of the settlement agreement on the rightsholder side are criticizing it as an unfair "compulsory license" which infringes on the property rights of authors.

I think it's fair to say that there is "general agreement" that the settlement agreement gives Google an "initial monopoly" on works that remain orphans. There is divergence on how to describe Google's position with respect to other classes of works.

Jim Carlile: The settlement agreement has nothing to do with public domain works. It covers only works that are in copyright.

### *Walt Crawford, May 25*

Eric: If someone translates a public domain work, the translation is, I believe, legitimately copyrightable—and does not in any way lessen access to the original work. So I wouldn't buy calling that "privatization" either. It doesn't fit any of the definitions of the word that I've found.

As to "general agreement" on a monopoly situation—if there's actually a consensus among all lawyers and commentators, then isn't the proposed settlement doomed on antitrust grounds? (There was surely never "general agreement" as to the strength of Google's fair-use argument; I'm really surprised if there's legitimately consensus on the monopoly claim. Are Google's own lawyers really that far out of touch with the entire legal community?)

### *Siva Vaidhyanathan, May 25*

I believe Eric has raised a very important point that reflects on a very different notion of "privatization," and that is of policy. There was this problem or challenge: It's safe to say that creating a text-searchable digital index of millions or billions of books, and making them available via the Web would benefit the republic and the planet. Let's just assume that.

Given that assumption, what prevented us from doing that? Three things: the concentration and expense of the delivery technology (the Web); the expense of scanning, indexing, maintaining, and supporting the collection (what Google is doing but libraries should have been doing); and changing copyright law to facilitate this scanning under the right conditions.

The first challenge took care of itself for most of the United States and Europe — mostly through libraries. But we still have a long way to go with the rest of the world.

The second challenge is being met (poorly, I would say) by Google boldly reaching out and doing it. Whether libraries should have given away their riches to Google was the subject of most of the debate within the library community before the settlement.

That third challenge is a doozy. Congress should have decided this issue. I firmly believe that if we want something in this country we should petition the legislature and launch a political movement toward that end. Going to courts to solve the problem is unhealthy and risky. This was one of my main criticisms of the Google project before the settlement.

Now, if the settlement prevails, we will see a radical change in the law. Private law is being used to shape public policy over one of the most precious aspects of

republican ideology: the incentive system we rely on to fill the public domain with rich texts. This settlement establishes one company as the sole arbiter of a compulsory license over millions of books. It does so through the class-action process. It would establish an elaborate system not unlike ASCAP or BMI, but without the legislative scrutiny, deliberation, and specific exemption from antitrust.

This is too important to be left to the discretion of one search engine company, a small group of major publishers, a small group of elite authors, and one federal court in the Southern District of New York.

The rest of us should have stake in this process. We do not. We can blog about it all we want but none of the parties cares about our issues and concerns.

A handful of private actors are making public policy—thus privatizing the policy-making system.

That's actually a bigger problem than whether the act of capture "privatizes" the library. We can dispose of semantic disagreements. We can't dispose of this rather radical change in how policy is implemented.

### *Walt Crawford, May 25*

Other than a possible quibble about "what libraries should have been doing"—Michigan was, in fact, doing some of it, but the bucks to do scanning to library standards posed, and pose, a substantial barrier—I have no real disagreement with this latest comment.

### *Jim Carlile, May 25*

Actually, I'm just using PD works as an example of what can happen when one company gets in there and locks up the corpus. This possibility of "privatization" goes beyond just PD works, but I think it's important to remember that Google can end up privatizing the public domain, and at public expense. It's still privatization, in a very real, and not abstractly legal, sense.

But the problem with the Google "vending machine" idea goes way beyond public domain works. If libraries can sell copies of copyrighted OOP works, then they will have a great incentive to toss out many older books that aren't PD. I'm not worried about Harvard, I'm worried about large public libraries.

BTW, it's true that there's nothing in the Agreement regarding public domain works—those are controlled by Google's separate agreements with the contributing libraries. But in the UC agreement at least, there is no requirement that Google allow free downloads of PD materials— it's view only. Downloading is completely discretionary on the part of Google, and if libraries have Google vending machines, how much incentive do they all have to keep giving away their PD corpus for free? Not much.

Most people don't know this— they take it as a given that Google will always provide free downloads of PD works. But there is no basis for this faith.



So far the discussion has revolved around abstract notions of privatization in regards to scanning and acquisition. But what I'm talking about is Google locking up the books for profit. That's privatization front and center, and it can easily happen.

*Eric Hellman, May 26*

Walt- Just because something is a monopoly, doesn't mean it has antitrust problems. Indeed, copyrights, patents and trademarks all create 100% legal monopolies. Randy Picker's paper does a wonderful job of illuminating the murkiness of antitrust law as applied to the Google Book Search Settlement agreement and makes suggestions as to how possible antitrust concerns might be addressed. [http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=1387582](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1387582)

*Jim Carlile, May 29*

[Omitting reference to pseudonymous comment.] In ten years or less, the very real consequences of Google locking everything up for a downloading or view-only fee will overshadow any of these philosophical arguments about exactly what they are doing right now.

And it's already begun. To get back to planet Earth, Google has now restricted the downloading of a number of PD journal titles. It's view-only for these guys— they even claim that the copyright holders have “granted permission” for us to view their full scans! This is disingenuous, of course, but it's where they are at with this Book scheme. It will only get worse, too.

My concerns are with this privatization of access. I'm not worried about Harvard or UCLA students getting their books, I'm worried about the public at large, who will very quickly be seeing their collections weeded of Google “duplicates” and their only alternative the Google machine.

The worst thing right now is that the negotiated Settlement has already blown any possibility of liberating orphan works from onerous copyright restrictions, because they want to essentially place these works back into print, Google style. It's no coincidence that the Settlement only mentions orphan works three times in its 100+ pages. That's because their fate will be a profitable one for Google and Google alone. But it's very bad public policy, even if it is a nice private gain also for whoever operates those vending machines and the few orphan rightsholders who come out of the woodwork. At the very least, there shouldn't be a dispute that the Agreement at least puts under private control all orphan works. That's bad enough.

*Peter Murray, May 30*

Jim Carlile says:

And it's already begun. To get back to planet Earth, Google has now restricted the downloading of a number of PD journal titles.

If the content is truly in the public domain, then anyone can do anything they want with it — including limiting the number of downloaded copies or how the content is viewed online. In other words, there is nothing preventing you from digitizing the content on your own dime, creating the server infrastructure, and buying the bandwidth necessary to serve it to the world. I'm sure any number of institutions would like to chat with you if you were willing to put in that kind of effort.

Let's keep some perspective here, okay?

## Closing Notes

After writing the introductory section of this essay and formatting the long quoted sections, I turned to the evil empire to search “privatization Google Books” (as words, not phrase), to see what others have been saying recently.

The first result is the very high profile Siva Vaidhyanathan, essentially repeating the two long comments that appear above. That's Google Page Rank at work: The same text appearing on Vaidhyanathan's blog is always going to show up higher, even if it originally appeared on my blog. Then you get list items citing Vaidhyanathan's blog—several of them—and an odd column quoting Kahle's similar use of “privatization.”

I should note that Brewster Kahle uses more extreme language than Siva V. Speaking of the University of California, he criticizes it for “privatizing its library system” and says “They're effectively **giving their library** to a single corporation”...*even as he's pleased that they're also working with OCA.* [Emphasis added.] Maybe “effectively” serves to end any discussions of logic or language.

Paging through unrelated results (remember, I didn't do a phrase search), I looked for citations involving anyone but Siva Vaidhyanathan or Brewster Kahle—some of that mass consensus as to the NewSpeak usage of “privatization.” I didn't find loads of it. I did find one comment, on Digg, from someone else (“billricardi”) who found Kahle's language preposterous:

Brewster, have you blown a logic fuse? Do you think because Google has an online library, suddenly every physical library in the world is going to disappear? Does he think Google BURNS the books after they scan them? Does he think that brick and mortar libraries will be forced to shred these books if they have copies?

Google has just created a new way to access these books, it IN NO WAY impacts libraries that are currently out there. If people want to they can use Google. If not, they can do it the old way. Nobody is 'privatizing our libraries'. A company has found a new way to make information available, not destroying the old ways.

Eventually, I reached Karen Coyle's usage. Even later, I reached an item from The American Consumer Institute and another from Eric Ivanov at IFC.com, the latter suggesting that access to public libraries might be going away anyway, as might print books. I stopped after the first hundred of the 690 results Google would be willing to show me. I didn't really see a range of people echoing the "privatization" refrain.

This discussion is **not** about whether the proposed settlement is ideal, should be modified, or should be abandoned entirely. It's about language and demonization. "Privatization" is a vivid rallying cry for some sectors (although it's also been an energizing cry for other sectors, those who believe privatization is a good thing—e.g. many Republicans). But vividness does not, in my mind, excuse fundamental inaccuracy—and misusing the language will turn off those of us who believe that words *do* have meaning.

I believe there are valid concerns about the proposed settlement. I'm delighted to see that a range of parties is raising some of those concerns. I don't believe it's necessary to abuse the English language in order to raise those concerns. Nothing in these posts, the comments, or the other statements I've read leads me to agree that "privatization" accurately describes what's happening here.

**"This settlement makes it likely that Google will be the only digital source for many or most orphan works, and that's a bad thing."** There's a statement I'd agree with, and it strikes me as short and clear enough to function as an argument...without using "privatizing" or any variant. Now was that so hard?

## Trends & Quick Takes Myths and Limits

The most dispiriting commentaries I've seen during the current recession are those suggesting that Americans' new-found frugality—or, let's say, sensible spending behavior—is strictly temporary. That, to put it bluntly, most Americans will start overspending again just as soon as they get a chance.

I hope that's not true. I've written previously about limits—which are always there, whether we recognize them or not—and my hope that we'd learn to live within them. Public libraries, important all the time, are even more important in times of limits.

Unfortunately, there's some evidence to back the dispiriting claim that, as soon as happy days are here again, people will go out and **SPEND SPEND SPEND**

whether they need things or not, whether they can really afford them or not. The brief presence of sensible gasoline prices (\$4 a gallon and up, still relatively modest by European standards) seemed to help convince people that hybrids and small cars with great gas mileage make more sense for most people than Dodge Dinosaurs and other mega-SUVs. (At least around much of Northern California, most people don't seem to need much convincing—if a street isn't half Hondas, it's half Priuses. With, to be sure, a bunch of pickups and "luxury" cars mixed in.) And yet, and yet...once gas prices dropped to low levels again, people started heading for the monster vehicles again.

There are lots of factors behind that. Billions of dollars every year work to persuade us that bigger is always better, you should toss out the old and buy the new, you're a better person if you overspend—and big cars and trucks are The American Way.

I'll write about limits again in the future. Here, though, I'd like to note Po Bronson's "What should I do with my life now?" in the April 2009 *Fast Company*, an update to his 2003 article and book *What Should I Do With My Life?* As Bronson notes, 2003 was a tough time too—after the tech bubble burst and after 9/11. Bronson offers six "myths" as an update to the earlier article. The myths in bold; my paraphrase or note in parentheses.

- **People are the architects of their own change.** (Most of us get pushed into change—we're fired or can't cope with a new boss.)
- **All it takes is passion.** (Not really.)
- **Your dream job has no sucky parts.** (Bronson calls this the "Fallacy of Intrinsic Fit." As he says, *all jobs have things you hate about them.*)
- **You'll love the job for the job.** (I comment on this later on.)
- **There is "the one."** (Nope. Almost any of us could find worth in a fair range of jobs.)
- **You don't know what you want.** (Of course you do—the problem is figuring out how to get it.)

All good stuff—but I was particularly taken with Myth 4 (You'll love the job for the job). Bronson takes an old parable and expands on it. The parable's about three bricklayers working together all morning. At break time, one guy asks the others why they're doing this job. One says "I'm doing it for the wages." The second says "I'm doing it for my wife and kids." The person asking the question looks up at what they're building and says "I'm helping to build a cathedral."

Bronson says most people hear the parable and think the third guy has the right answer. But, says, Bronson, all three answers are right—all three men

have a sense of purpose. But Bronson goes a little farther:

The real lesson of the parable: Notice what no man answered. Not one said, “I just love laying bricks.” Doing something for the sheer love of it is not what real people mean when they say their work provides a sense of purpose.

Part of me wants to say “Right on!”—the part that’s heard too much of the “Finding the work you’ll love to do” line. But another part recognizes that many people *do* love what they’re doing—that their work is fulfilling on its own merits. I suspect that’s true of some programmers; it’s probably true of many unpublished writers (although it’s rarely “work” in those cases); I wouldn’t be at all surprised if it’s true of some artisan bricklayers. For that matter, do some of the scientists working on weapons systems ignore the purposes of their work—but just love doing the science? (I honestly have no idea.)

You can live a long, fulfilling, *worthwhile* life without ever doing work that you love. Are those who love their work for its own sake better off than those who do it for some other reason—whether it’s the larger purpose of the work or pay and other rewards? I have no idea.

## They are Not Your Friends

That’s the start of the tease for “The business guide to Congress” in the May 11, 2009 *Fortune*—and it certainly clarifies both *Fortune*’s position and the extent to which one class of business leaders plans to work *with* the Democratic president and Congress. The first sentence of the article proper: “Washington is a dangerous place for business leaders these days.”

I shouldn’t be surprised. The columnists in this magazine (which I’ve been getting because Time Warner basically threw it in *free* along with an absurdly discounted subscription to *Money*—I’m paying \$30 for three years of both magazines—and because I do like to read some business magazines now and then) are preaching the same doctrines this year that they must have been preaching in 2006. “What’s good for General Motors is good for the USA” oversimplifies the line, but not by much.

Still, this article seemed a bit harsher than most—and reading it more closely, I recognized why. It’s at least partly based on the ideas of Eric Dezenhall, a “crisis consultant” who should be familiar to anyone who’s been following Open Access. If the name doesn’t ring a bell, I’d suggest reading *Cites & Insights* 7:4 (April 2007) and 7:11 (October 2007)—or at least the LIBRARY ACCESS TO SCHOLARSHIP articles in those

issues ([citesandinsights.info/v7i4b.htm](http://citesandinsights.info/v7i4b.htm) and [citesandinsights.info/v7i11c.htm](http://citesandinsights.info/v7i11c.htm)). Dezenhall is the author of *Nail ‘Em! Confronting High-Profile Attacks on Celebrities and Businesses* and apparently the genius behind PRISM. He’s a great one for nuance: in this piece, he “likens today’s Congress to a colonial Salem for corporate executives.” But the article explains how the good guys (corporations) can nonetheless save America from unions, health care reform, taxes to match spending and pollution control—you know, the evil forces that will destroy America.

## The World of Plentiful Bandwidth

I clearly live in a different world than, say, Steve Fox of *PC World*. In the May 2009 issue, his editorial says internet TV is “almost ready for prime time.” Part of that is that “we have plentiful bandwidth, great networking, mega-HDTVs, and unlimited storage.” Really? How many people have enough bandwidth to stream Blu-ray quality HDTV? How many people even have ISPs that would allow them to stream, say, 30GB *per day* (one two-hour movie each day) without consequences?

As with any true believer, Fox claims inevitability: “At some point all of us **will** be getting our TV over the Internet.” (Emphasis added.) No ifs, ands or buts; no partial successes; no possibility that something else might replace the internet. I’m hardly surprised that he follows this absolute projection with a comment about the “withering newspaper industry which was similarly slow to embrace the Web as a delivery mechanism.” Really? SFGate’s been around since 1994, and other newspapers have had websites for quite a few years. What newspapers have *not* found, to date, is a way to make serious money online.

The editorial refers to an article, “12 ways to bring YouTube to the Boob Tube.” It’s an interesting piece, but one that deals with the generally poor quality of streaming video by ignoring it.

## My Back Pages

# Changing Everything

I should probably have included *PC World*’s December 2008 “FuturTech” set of Hot New Technologies for 2009 in the March Predictions roundup—but maybe it works just as well here. We’re told in the first paragraph that the memristor “is already starting to revolutionize everything we know about computing.” That’s a tall order for a device that only exists in labs (and represents a 38-year-old concept). As one who would love to replace CFLs with LED lights (preferably

bly OLED), who thought I'd be able to buy either an OLED HDTV (bigger than 12") or an FED HDTV a couple of years ago, I'd love to believe that creating something in a laboratory means it's *right around the corner* in vast commercial quantities—but it rarely works that way. “Researchers say that no real barrier prevents implementing the memristor in circuitry immediately.” Even though *there are no commercial products and none expected until 2012*, the article says this development “is already starting to revolutionize” and says memristors “will likely replace both DRAM and hard disks” in 2014-2016! Of course, based on predictions like that, hard disks disappeared more than a decade ago. Didn't they?

What else? Your single-core CPU is “officially a dinosaur” (so much for netbooks!) and we'll have 32-core CPUs Real Soon Now. (If everything's moving to the cloud, why would you need 32-core CPUs in your netbooks? Silly question, I suppose.) We also get this lovely headline: “Windows 7: It's Inevitable.” They're going to come to your door and *force* you to turn in your Mac OS X, Linux, Vista and Windows XP machines in favor of Windows 7.

Here's a fast shiny new toy to distract you while the “inevitable” happens: USB 3.0, since the sluggish 480Mb speed of USB 2.0 “just doesn't cut it any longer.” Instead, you'll get 4.8Gb/second throughput. I'm sure you're chafing at the bit, finding that USB 2.0 is the bottleneck in your everyday computing, right?

What else? The ever-promising wireless power transmission—although this time it's over a distance of “a few feet” with 70% efficiency, which seems like a truly awful idea in a time when ecology is supposed to matter. Hand gestures to control your wall-size TV (if you're thinking what I'm thinking, stop it!). And a bunch of other stuff, some of it reasonable. A sidebar includes some of their “greatest hits” and “biggest misses” in 25 years of predictions—but a “hit” depends on your interpretation. A 1988 prediction said we'd all have a little box containing all our files and programs, and would carry it with us all the time. Their take? That's a big hit—but “for most people, that little box is now also their MP3 player or cell phone.” Really? **Most** people carry *all their files and programs* on their MP3 player or cell phone?

## Pity the Poor Leveler

An editorial in the February 2009 *Stereophile* offers another take on why the True Golden-Eared Audiophiles hear “huge” differences between vastly expensive pieces of audio equipment and only moderately

expensive alternatives—while the rest of us may hear no differences at all, and certainly not the kind of difference that justifies spending half a megabuck on a stereo system.

It's a psychological theory, another black-and-white dichotomy, saying we're either Sharpeners or Levelers. Sharpeners exaggerate differences (or, in their minds, are capable of distinguishing differences) while Levelers minimize or ignore differences (or, in the minds of Sharpeners, are deaf). And maybe it's an *inherent personality characteristic*—different people simply have different “just noticeable difference” levels. Or maybe, as the writer suggests, it's learned—and learning to exaggerate (sorry, “notice”) difference is “part of the learning process of becoming an audiophile.” Oddly, in giving an example, the writer assumes that “seasoned audiophiles” will in fact *hear* differences in every case—but the “relative sharpener” will call the difference something like “a lifting of several veils” while the “relative leveler” will say the difference, “*while worthwhile*, is fairly small.” Emphasis added: The writer does not admit to the possibility that a seasoned audiophile will say “What difference?” or “That difference isn't worth a dime, much less \$50K.”

And, of course, to be a reviewer, you must be a Sharpener—able to hear minute differences and deem them important. Or maybe to hear differences whether they're there or not...

The writer is actually arguing that, once you've chosen your system, you should switch back to Leveler mode so you can actually enjoy listening to the music. Can you really switch learned hyperacuity and the tendency to exaggerate differences on and off that easily?

Think I'm kidding about the half-megabuck system? In *The Absolute Sound's* February 2009 report on the Rocky Mountain Audio Fest, Steven Stone's “best sound” award goes to Ray Kimber's room—a system costing \$535,000, *not* including turntable (unless I'm mistaken). On the other hand, another room at RMAF was, apparently, very impressive—and total cost of the full system was \$7,200, which would be less than one-fifth of the *sales tax* on the Kimber system in California.

## Ending Debates

The March 2009 *Absolute Sound* spells it out simply, in a piece by Robert Harley on choosing an LP playback system: “It's worth noting that at the highest levels of music playback, there's not much of a debate; LP is the clear winner.” If you believe Harley, it's not even a matter of the CD standard being refined enough: “There's just a fundamental musical rightness to a

pure analog source (one that has never been digitized) that seems to better convey the music's expressiveness (and to more completely involve the listener in that expressiveness)."

That's it: *There's not much of a debate.* If you're a True Audiophile, you know that digitization destroys music by chopping it up into little slices. Never mind the strong indication that much of the LP mystique has to do with—as also noted in this piece—setting up and tweaking a turntable, “putting a large black disc on a slowly rotating turntable” and all that. Harley admits that LPs mistrack, have ticks and pops, have surface noise and wear badly—but *proper* listeners “hear past the LP's flaws and enjoy the medium's overall musicality.” See, all those problems are *nothing* compared to “the distortion imposed by digitally encoding and decoding an audio signal.” The piece continues into outright advocacy—basically, Harley says that if you think CDs sound good you just haven't heard a good LP setup.

Which really makes you wonder about another article in this “analog focus” issue of the magazine: “Converting LPs to digital files: A step-by-step process.” The author, Steven Stone, calls it “archiving.” Stone's definitely a high-ender: He spends “at least 40 minutes” just tweaking his turntable and arm *before* each digitization session. But why would you do this at all? Haven't you destroyed the musicality by digitally encoding it, even at the high data rates Stone recommends? (It's an interesting article in other ways: After noting Apple Lossless and FLAC data formats, both of which compress files *with absolutely no loss of data*, Stone adds: “[D]epending on the software used and your own degree of perfectionism you may find that any amount of data compression, even if lossless, is unacceptable.” *What part of lossless do these people not understand?* “Lossless” means that *precisely the same bitstream* emerges from decompression as went into compression.)

Ah, but it gets better. Stone talks about “archiving” and Harley admits that records slowly wear away (not so slowly if you're not careful)—but in a turntable review later in the issue, Robert E. Greene says “vinyl is, to all intents and purposes, eternal.” Really! (Honest, I couldn't make these things up. Oddly, the turntable reviewed is relatively cheap: A mere \$2,850. I did say “relatively.”)

## It's Your Money

Near the end of a glowing review for the \$12,000 Boulder 865 Integrated Amplifier in the April 2009 *Stereophile*, Wes Phillips offers this comment:

Who needs a big, brawny integrated amp? Hey, who needs *any* high-end gear? Some of us want it and can afford it—and, thank goodness, some companies go to all the trouble of making it for us.

Not “this is so clearly superior that you'd be a fool not to buy it”—but “why not?” It's hard to argue with that...particularly following a section in which Phillips compares this pricey amp with some even-pricier separates and admits that the differences he “heard” are somewhere between minor and nonexistent.

## Cheaping Out

Speaking of money, I found the April 2009 article “Downsize your tech budget” in *PC World* a bit underwhelming. It's got 31 tips (yes! another list!) to “save big bucks.” Some of them—maybe most—are entirely sensible, but some are more difficult. That begins with the first tip, to buy your big-screen TV online to save money. There's something to be said for keeping retail operators in business—and if you're doing all your *shopping* (comparing models, etc.) in the stores, then buying online, you're undermining local retail.

The third tip is the first one that really gets to me, though: “Stop buying CDs, start saving cash.” The author, Rick Broida, is arguing that you should pay \$9 to download a current album from Amazon's MP3 store rather than \$11 for a discounted CD. Apart from liner notes, there's the matter of audio quality: “Audiophiles may disagree, but to my ears a 256-kbps MP3 sounds just as good as a CD.” Maybe to his ears, but probably not to a lot of other ears.

A bit later, we get “Buy no-brand ink,” even though *PC World's* own tests show that third-party and remanufactured cartridges tend to have lower print quality and fade resistance.

Broida also advises us to skip Blu-ray players and ditch cable. He thinks upconverted DVDs are just fine and figures streaming video can replace cable. I hate to say it, but a “home theater” that uses streaming video is *really* a waste of money—you're not getting anywhere near the picture quality you're paying for. Broida estimates that dumping cable will save \$600 to \$1,800 a year. I don't pay anywhere near \$50 a month for basic cable (limited basic, all that we need)...and \$16 times 12 isn't all that impressive.

## Emailing While Driving

The “Here's How” piece (in the April 2009 *PC World*) is entitled “Manage your e-mail safely while driving.” Not *while riding* but **while driving**. “Who hasn't occa-

sionally longed to check e-mail while sitting in the driver's seat during a commute or road trip?" People who care about safety, for one. The piece recommends voice-managed web services—but while that may be hands-free, it's still *enormously* dangerous—based on studies I've read, at least as bad as driving drunk. Do people really need to be that connected all the time? "Safely" in this case is an oxymoron in my book.

## Blowchart?

I'll admit it: I once again succumbed to a free-subscription offer for *Wired*. And, silly, hyper, unbalanced as it frequently is, once in a while it's also charming.

As in the great flowchart on page 29 of the April 2009 issue: "Which blowhard am I?" Particularly given that Chris Anderson, *Wired* Editor-in-Chief, who can afford to tell the rest of us that content should be free since he makes a good salary, appears on the chart. As do Jeff Jarvis, Nicholas Carr, Seth Godin, Michael Arrington, Dave Winer, and Jason Calacanis. And Mark Cuban.

Am I about to defend any of these against the charge of being a blowhard? I don't know much about Mark Cuban. Otherwise...

## Mom 3.0

Maybe it's enough just to repeat that headline from a March 2009 *EContent* news item. The item's about "marketing to high-tech mom," and it quotes Maria T. Bailey (author of a book whose title you may be able to guess), who says "Moms today actually act in a 3.0 fashion using Web 2.0 technology."

So Moms have created the semantic web? No—they use technology to stay in touch, "finding new ways to leverage existing technology to make their existing lives easier." How is that 3.0 anything? Because Maria T. Bailey says so, and *she wrote the book*.

Guess what hot technology, pushing the boundaries of Web 2.0 and crossing over into the advanced 3.0 sphere, Moms (all Moms?) use most? **Cell phones**. Do FaceBook and MySpace sound more 3.0ish to you? Those are next.

I hereby declare single-author eJournals such as *Cites & Insights* to be the cutting edge of 4.0. Why not?

## More Money Equals Better

At least that's the impression I get from John Marks' "As we see it" in the May 2009 *Stereophile*, "Tomorrow's classics are today's bargains." The core column is plausible—there are certain models and brands of

[whatever: in this case audio gear, but could be lots of other things] that are likely to *gain* in value in the very long run because they become classics.

He begins by asserting that a used Mercedes is a better deal than a new Camry. Which might or might not be true, but I'm bemused by the *one and only reason* Marks gives: "having started with a much larger 'build budget,' it is, simply, more car for the money all around." By that metric, cars built by the "Big Three" automakers are automatically better cars than those built by Honda or Toyota—they definitely cost more to build. The "build budgets" are higher.

Now, if you can demonstrate that Mercedes-Benz' engineering for efficiency is as good as Toyota's, that the work forces make comparable salaries, that all other *cost* factors are equal, and that the extra money is going into things that fundamentally improve the car, *then* there's a case that the Mercedes is a better car. But that's a whole lot of unstated assumptions. I know of few companies that know as much about building high-quality, fuel-efficient, low-emission engines than Honda—but I know of quite a few companies that spend a lot more to build their engines. Does that make the other engines better? Only if you equate price with value.

Which, now that I think about it, could explain a lot about *Stereophile* and some other outlets. Maybe, to some of these writers, more money *does* automatically equal better.

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## Masthead

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