

Cites & Insights

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Volume 7, Number 8: July 2007

ISSN 1534-0937

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Perspective

Pew Do You Trust?

Pew Internet & American Life owes me an apology.

Not just me. Pew owes apologies to 18 million Americans (making one huge leap of faith).

That may be too low. I could argue that the number is really 40.4 million. But for now, let's stick with me and 18 million other Americans who Pew has directly insulted.

Who are we? **Lackluster veterans**. That's Pew's label, repeated at least three dozen times in *A Typology of Information and Communication Technology Users*, Pew's May 7, 2007 release. (The other 22.5 million: "Connected but hassled." I'll get back to them.)

Lackluster is a good old word, dating back to 1600. Here's the full definition in Merriam-Webster's *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*: "lacking in sheen, radiance, or vitality: dull, mediocre."

I don't believe Pew Internet & American Trust is labeling me as having non-shiny skin (lacking in sheen) or failing to have an aura (radiance), so it appears that I'm lacking in vitality, dull and mediocre. Isn't that nice? I won't offer my initial two-word response, since this is a family journal.

What makes me dull, mediocre, lacking in vitality?

Lackluster Veterans: 8% of American adults make up a group who are not at all passionate about their abundance of modern ICTs [information and communications technology]. Few like the intrusiveness their gadgets add to their lives and not many see ICTs adding to their personal productivity.

For **Lackluster Veterans**, the thrill of information technology is gone—if it was ever there to begin with. And they have had ample time to come to this conclusion. The members of this fortyish group of mostly men came online in the mid-1990s, and they have acquired the laptop computer and broadband connection along the way to becoming frequent users of the internet.

But their habits of connectivity seem to have the weight of necessity more than a full-hearted embrace of information technology's affordances. Only a few Lackluster Veterans like how information technology makes them more available to others, and not many think it adds to their personal productivity. Doing without email or a cell phone would be hard for only some of these men. All in all, Lackluster Veterans seem content with surfing the Web or emailing family and friends, but they do not show great inclination to stretch their technology habits to self-expression or mobile media.

"Full-hearted embrace." "The thrill...is gone." This is not the language of observation. The slap in the face of **Lackluster Veterans** makes that abundantly clear. This is full-out advocacy. Pew Internet & American Life seems to have decided that you must wholeheartedly embrace every aspect of mobile communications and the internet or there's something wrong with you.

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Digging a little deeper

That snappy little summary isn't accurate. If you believe the detailed breakdowns—and since you're now dealing with percentages of *much* smaller groups (301 survey respondents in this category), it's not clear how much you should believe them—fewer than half of us mediocrities have laptop computers, despite the flat statement in the summary. "They have acquired" usually doesn't mean "45% of them have acquired," but this is the new and improved Pew's language. Only 17% of us poor dreary lacklusters have webcams, as compared to 51% of "omnivores," the group Pew clearly regards as the best and the brightest.

Think I'm kidding? Here's the first bullet in the study's front page: "8% of Americans are deep users of

the participatory Web and mobile applications.” Those are the Omnivores—the “most active participants in the information society, consuming information goods and services at a high rate and using them as a platform for participation and self-expression.” These folks are “Web 2.0 devotees,” “highly engaged with video online and digital content,” “confident in their ability to manage the flow of electronic information.” The few, the proud, the always-connected, with an “extensive suite of technology tools to do an enormous range of things online, on the go, and with their cell phones”—these are the Omnivores, 20ish masters of all they survey.

Pew’s upbeat on two other groups of “elite tech users” too—“the connectors,” mostly women, not online quite as long and without quite as much “technological self-confidence,” and “productivity enhancers,” people who greatly value ICTs but who “may not have time to participate in many online content creation activities or to try leading edge applications.” Connectors will become omnivores, just give them time—and if productivity enhancers weren’t so busy with jobs, kids and other boring offline stuff, they’d be there too.

Every omnivore has a cell phone, as do 92% of Connectors and 94% of Productivity Enhancers—but only a tawdry 76% of us Lackluster Veterans. On the other hand, the mediocrities have more desktop computers than Connectors and Productivity Enhancers (by a margin probably well within sampling error).

Other highlighted tidbits: 90% of Lackluster Veterans go online on the average day, “but it doesn’t do a lot for them.” “Just a third of Lackluster Veterans would find it hard to give up their cell phones.” So it’s not surprising that the regular text calls us “tepid”—after all, “ICTs do not play a central role in different dimensions of their lives.” In other words, ICTs are *part* of the lives of Lackluster Veterans—and that appears to be Not Good Enough for Pew.

There’s more—a *lot* more in this 55-page report. I won’t go through most of it. It’s worth noting that Pew apparently thinks we should be *paying* for digital content—that’s one of eight “online behaviors” they feature, and as you’d expect Omnivores are a lot more likely to do it than LVs (50% compared to 26%). If you’re looking at tables, *first* go to pages 52 and 53, where you’ll see that detailed percentages (and the sweeping generalizations) are based on populations of (for example) a whopping 229 Omnivores, 301 Lackluster Veterans and 417 Connected but Hassled.

What about the Connected but Hassled? As I read it, they’re basically the female half of Lackluster Veterans but with a year’s less online experience and somewhat more reluctance to go online frequently. Pew’s not too happy with this group either: they’ve “invested in a lot of technology” but “are decidedly unenthusiastic about the hardware and services they have acquired.” The new things just aren’t that shiny any more for either of these two groups.

You might protest that I don’t belong in **Lackluster Veterans**, and that’s true in two ways: I participate in more forms of online content generation than most in this group—and I have *less* technology than most. The online short form placed me in LV, however, and that gives me the right to protest on account of 18 million people.

Do I “believe I am more productive because of *all* of my electronic devices”? (Emphasis added.) That’s a tricky question. Since most of my productivity involves my desktop and the internet, I’d have to say they make me more productive. My rarely-used cell phone? Not so much. If I had an MP3 player? Not really. A webcam? Nahh...but when and if I have use for a webcam, I’ll buy one and use it.

Browsing the search engines while writing this essay, I encountered some fascinating notes. The analyst who wrote the Pew report seems to think us mediocrities are trapped in the decade-old technology we started with. That may be even more insulting than the term. A rather wonderful article at *Data Directions*, written from an Omnivore’s perspective, had this comment: “Lackluster veterans don’t avoid technology; they just use it as a means to an end. They find other ways to entertain themselves, like real life instead of Second Life.”

Why does it matter?

Pew could have chosen any number of neutral descriptors for this group and for the other “connected” group that doesn’t get a big thrill out of new tech. When I blogged about this survey, I used the term **Experienced Skeptics** as a more neutral alternative to **Lackluster Veterans**. For that matter, a group advocating a balanced approach to real life, local communities and the internet could rename Omnivores as **TechnoJunkies** and Lackluster Veterans (and Connected but Hassled) as **Balanced Users**, lending a very different air to the report.

I think those labels would be just as biased and derogatory as Lackluster Veterans. I know people who

qualify as Omnivores who I wouldn't call techno-junkies. I seem to know quite a few experienced, balanced technology users who turn out to be Lackluster Veterans, making this an even more annoying label.

The primary issue links back to the title of this essay. Here's the stated mission of Pew Internet & American Life, taken directly from the website:

The Pew Internet & American Life Project produces reports that explore the impact of the Internet on families, communities, work and home, daily life, education, health care, and civic and political life. The Project aims to be an authoritative source on the evolution of the Internet through collection of data and analysis of real-world developments as they affect the virtual world.

Pew Internet & American Life wants to be an *authoritative* and, presumably, *trusted* source. In my mind, in order to be a fully trusted source—at least one that bases reports on surveys—you must also be impartial.

With the release of this report, Pew Internet & American Life abandons any semblance of impartiality. This report is *advocacy*—denigrating those who understand technology but don't love it enough to satisfy Pew.

The term **Lackluster Veterans** isn't a one-time slip of the analyst's keyboard: It appears *at least* three dozen times within the report and was clearly chosen intentionally. It is a term that has no conceivably positive or neutral meaning: It is a deliberate insult.

Given that advocacy is now clear and unmistakable, I'll approach Pew reports differently in the future. I'll go in with the same assumptions I would with, say, a Cato Institute position paper or a survey sponsored by MPAA or anything of the sort. Once you assume advocacy, you deal with findings differently.

I hope the analysts had fun dismissing 18 million people as dull and mediocre—after all, how could we *know* this stuff, be online for a decade or more, and not be *in love* with it? We could, we do, and (in my case at least) I'm afraid we no longer trust Pew.

©1: Term and Extent

PermaCopyright and Other Extremes

Beyond the strange permutations of DRM, DMCA, fair use and legislative attempts to push copyright law one way or the other, we sometimes see true outlying cases. Thus it is this time around, with no apologies for a half-year absence. I give you Mark Helprin of the

Claremont Institute and his May 20, 2007 New York *Times* op-ed, "A great idea lives forever, shouldn't its copyright?" And in an attempt to make *Cites & Insights* a full-service ejournal, I have *the solution* to Helprin's op-ed and those who find it ridiculous: see "An immodest proposal" later in this essay. First Helprin.

Helprin grumbles about taxation in general but says that once you've paid your taxes, your possessions are *yours* in perpetuity, to do with as you please.

That is, unless you own a copyright. Were I tomorrow to write the great American novel (again?), 70 years after my death the rights to it, though taxed at inheritance, would be stripped from my children and grandchildren.

Hmm. Did you know there were specific inheritance taxes on intellectual property? I didn't—and I don't believe there are. So, unless I'm badly mistaken, Helprin's got it wrong in one: Unlike real property, intellectual "property" is taxed *only* to the extent that it results in income. I don't know of any Patent Tax or Annual Copyright Levy. His initial comparison of a house to a copyright is so absurdly wrong as to be laughable. But Helprin is nothing if not serious.

He denounces the Constitution for abridging his rights as a Creator. He claims the public domain is essentially a "transfer of wealth from the families of American writers to the executives and stockholders of various businesses..." He seems to think *other* forms of property ownership offer the protection copyright holders have. And, of course, his essay title is purely nonsense, *as he knows*: Ideas are not copyrightable, and he even says, "Ideas are immaterial to the question of copyright." In the end he argues that Congress should extend the term of copyright "as far as it can throw."

Would it not be just and fair for those who try to extract a living from the uncertain arts of writing and composing to be freed from a form of confiscation not visited upon anyone else? The answer is obvious, and transcends even justice. No good case exists for the inequality of real and intellectual property, because no good case can exist for treating with special disfavor the work of the spirit and the mind.

Strong stuff. Now let's go back to the first sentence, where he speaks of paying the taxes on earnings used to build a house, sales taxes on materials, real estate taxes during your life and inheritance taxes during your death. There are also various transfer and licensing costs, but never mind.

Consider how many of those taxes are visited upon intellectual property. I count **zero**, *especially* for copyright, since there's not even the cost of registra-

tion (that no longer being required). Here's the deal: You pay nothing for copyright. You get absolute control over not only copying of your "creation," but also derivative works—nobody can base a new work on your work without permission. You get a level of control rare for most real property. In return, your heirs may eventually give up some of those rights.

Do you have absolute rights over other property, to pass along and do with entirely as you please without government claim or interference? Really?

- Try putting up a four-story homemade shack lined with fluorescent-orange coated aluminum on *your real estate* in a suburban community. Well, it's your property, isn't it?
- Try driving your car 120 miles an hour down city streets. It's *your car*, isn't it?
- OK, you can't do that. Why not park your car and torch it—after all, it's *your property* and you should be able to do with it as you wish?
- Oh, and by the way, once you sell real property, you have *no more rights* over it. Period. But you can sell copies of copyright material and still retain control over other uses, including further copying of the copies you sold. Those are *much* greater rights than real property conveys.

What's that you say? Real property rights are limited by the needs of civilized society? Just so. And so, in order to promote the progress of science and useful arts, are copyright and other intellectual property rights. They're limited in different ways—but they also have different strengths, not incidentally including the lack of *any* taxation for the copyright itself.

Arguing for infinite copyright—using copied ideas and a near total misunderstanding of property

TeechDirt (www.techdirt.com) offered this reaction by Mike Masnick on May 21, 2007. Masnick notes that Helprin's piece appeared shortly after the formation of a new "copyright alliance" pushing for even stronger copyright laws (I'll get to that later).

A conspiracy-minded person might suggest that this is no coincidence, and that the best way to get stronger copyright and patent laws passed is to first get people arguing about ridiculously strong laws, and then get them to agree to "lesser" changes that are still much stronger than what we have today.

Masnick calls Helprin's piece "confused" and says he's making the mistake others make—"just because the linguistic convention is to call such things 'intellectual property,' it really is the same thing as property." Actu-

ally, I don't think Helprin's confused at all: he *wants* IP to be the same as real property, albeit without the taxation and constraints of real property.

To my mind, Masnick gets into trouble when he claims that *the* purpose of property is "to better manage the allocation of scarce resources." Maybe, maybe not. I'm happier with his comment on the unusual nature of copyright:

The purpose of copyright (and of patent law), then, wasn't the same as the purpose of property law. It has nothing to do with more efficient allocation of scarce resources. Instead, it's a government-granted incentive—a subsidy—to encourage the creation of new works. In other words, it was a case where the government believed there was a market failure. That is, they believed that without this incentive, certain intellectual works wouldn't be created—and the tradeoff between locking up that idea and creating more content was one that was worthwhile. However, they always knew that it was a tradeoff—which is not at all true for real property. And, as an incentive, many would say it's been plenty of incentive for many authors who have written books—including Helprin. As an author of 11 books, clearly the incentive was enough for him at the time. In effect, by arguing for extended copyright, Helprin is going back and asking the government to change the bargain it gave him and retroactively promise him more. It's as if you could go back to your boss for the work you did in 1975 and say you now want to be paid again for it. Or, more realistically, it's Helprin asking for welfare.

Of many comments, some noted the taxation issue. Two early comments—both anonymous—supported long or infinite copyright, one of them claiming that "scarcity of money" somehow justifies eternal copyright. One silly commenter said he was going to copy the post and print it out on flyers, selling them for \$1: He was sure Masnick wouldn't mind. This was a naïve thing to say—because Masnick responded. "Cool. Let me know how it goes.... If you can do a better job getting our content to the people who want it, more power to you."

Without researching his work in depth, I'm guessing that Masnick favors considerably less copyright protection than I do. It's worth noting (as he does, in a response to another comment) that, unlike me (so far, at least), he "produce[s] a ton of valuable content every day, and I get paid well for it." He's opposed to long copyrights "because I can make more money without them." For my own work, I'm *indifferent* to long copyrights—I can't think of anything I've written that will have significant commercial value 29 years after it first appears.

Lawrence Lessig and his wiki

Lessig didn't just blog about the Helprin article—he started a page, “Against perpetual copyright,” on his wiki (wiki.lessig.org). A word about that wiki: One of the few pages is “The Anti-Lessig Reader,” which is intended to be “a simple source for ‘the other side of the story.’” What a concept!

The page itself is a work in progress and you're probably better off reading it directly. If you do, don't miss the Discussion page, longer than the article and including a number of gems such as the following:

Dear Mr Helprin,

In light of a rumored bill before Congress to retroactively extend the limited copyright in the US to 25000 years after the death of the author (or the destruction of the last copy of the work, whichever comes last), we are investigating several potential copyright infringements in your last op-ed entitled “A Great Idea Lives Forever. Shouldn't Its Copyright?.”

Descendants of James Madison request to be compensated for any citation, partial or full, of any of his works. Descendants of Hammurabi (currently estimated at about 127 million) claim copyright on any western law text and discussion thereof, as they are all derivative works of Hammurabi's Code of Law. Finally, there have been claims by descendants of Evander, son of the Sybil, that all Roman letters fall under their copyright, and that therefore any text using them needs to pay them a fair share of proceeds.

Preliminary calculations put the projected statutory infringement fines at 4.2 trillion dollars. This number may change as more claimants come forward. As it is unknown how much more the US Congress is going to extend copyrights, we suggest to settle sooner rather than later.

Sincerely,

Howard Howe, Dewey, Chatham & Howe, LLP

Some commenters thought the Helprin piece *must* be satire (it isn't). Others pointed out that Helprin essentially rehashes a Mark Twain essay (now in the public domain, no thanks to Twain) and that one of his best-known novels takes its title from a Shakespeare play—and the first phrase in the book appears to be taken directly from the Bible. In both cases, tight perpetual copyright would mean trouble for Helprin (and, of course, would have eliminated most of Disney's early animated flicks).

The article-in-progress and discussion page both note that there *are* limits on real property—e.g., if you don't use it and someone else does, “adverse possession” can result in that person taking it from you. Lessig (who *is* a lawyer) says you *cannot* limit the use of

physical property in perpetuity: “the law recognizes that dead people shouldn't be allowed to control the use of physical property that might be put to better use by the living.”

Lessig posted “On the Helprin reply: Wow” on May 31, 2007 on his blog. He notes the extent to which the wiki article is better than his original might have been and possible differences in emphasis. He notes that long-copyright proponents want to couch the debate in terms of “respect” for the author, claiming that “remixers” (those who explicitly base new creations on old) don't respect the author. But, Lessig notes, Helprin barely cites anyone (failing to respect his indirect sources) even though he's dealing with a topic that's been discussed (and discussed and discussed...)—where Jonathan Lethem's “The ecstasy of influence,” a *Harper's Magazine* essay that discusses the usefulness and necessity of derivation in creation, has an originality similar to that of Peter Schickele works on P.D.Q. Bach albums: It's derivative but remixed to create something new. Which brings us to...

The ecstasy of influence

Lethem's February 2007 article is available (www.harper.org/archive/2007/02/0081387) as “Harper's makes articles like this available free to everyone.” It's a long article, the kind you rarely see these days in most magazines (it prints out at 34 pages plus 14 pages of attributions). It covers far too much ground to be summarized here (and Lethem's far too good a writer to deserve my butchery, even if much of the article is deliberately derived from other works). Just a few notes to give you a flavor...

He's talking about *influence* and the extent to which nearly all creative work is derived at least partly from previous works—even when the creator isn't aware of that influence. “Literature has always been a crucible in which familiar themes are continually recast.” (Originally in Michael Marr's *The Two Lolitas*.) The line “When you live outside the law, you have to eliminate dishonesty” appears in the 1958 movie *The Lineup*—and there's a pretty good chance Bob Dylan saw that film before he wrote *Absolutely Sweet Marie*.

Lethem notes that “originality and... appropriations are as one” might be said of *all* art, continuing with his search for the John Donne line (“All mankind is of one author, and is one volume; when one man dies, one chapter is not torn out of the book, but translated into a better language; and every chapter must be so translated...”), which he had heard in the

movie *84, Charing Cross Road*—except that it was abridged there. He wound up going from a movie to a book to a play to a website and back to a book—and the original Donne piece is primarily famous because of a later line, “never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee,” which Hemingway ripped off (in hardline copyright terms) for a book title. It’s a great anecdote...and Lethem cribbed the whole thing from Jonathan Rosen’s *The Talmud and the Internet*.

And so it goes (to quote Billy Joel’s song title, or Kurt Vonnegut, or...). The piece is chock-full of great stories, mostly *not* original to Lethem. I haven’t read Siva Vaidhyanathan’s *Copyrights and Copywrongs*, but his recounting of a 1941 discussion between Alan Lomax and Muddy Waters may inspire me to read it yet. (Waters sang “Country Blues” and said it “come to me just like that” while he was working on a car in 1938. When Lomax mentioned Robert Johnson’s “Walking Blues”—the same tune, recorded three years earlier—Waters immediately added four more somewhat contradictory accounts of the song’s origins.)

Lethem discusses the nature of current copyright and how much it is distorted from Jefferson’s original vision. He discusses “Disnial,” the hypocrisy of the Walt Disney Company in desiring eternal copyright over an empire founded so heavily on works in the public domain. He discusses the gift economy and the commons. Some of Lethem’s assertions:

Any text that has infiltrated the common mind to the extent of *Gone With the Wind* or *Lolita* or *Ulysses* inexorably joins the language of culture. A map-turned-to-landscape, it has moved to a place beyond enclosure or control. The authors and their heirs should consider the subsequent parodies, refractions, quotations, and revisions an honor, or at least the price of a rare success.

A corporation that has imposed an inescapable notion—Mickey Mouse, Band-Aid—on the cultural language should pay a similar price.

The primary objective of copyright is not to reward the labor of authors but “to promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts.” To this end, copyright assures authors the right to their original expression, but encourages others to build freely upon the ideas and information conveyed by a work. This result is neither unfair nor unfortunate.

Contemporary copyright, trademark, and patent law is presently corrupted. The case for perpetual copyright is a denial of the essential gift-aspect of the creative act. Arguments in its favor are as un-American as those for the repeal of the estate tax....

Any text is woven entirely with citations, references, echoes, cultural languages, which cut across it through and

through in a vast stereophony. The citations that go to make up a text are anonymous, untraceable, and yet *al-ready read*; they are quotations without inverted commas. The kernel, the soul—let us go further and say the substance, the bulk, the actual and valuable material of all human utterances—is plagiarism. For substantially all ideas are secondhand, consciously and unconsciously drawn from a million outside sources, and daily used by the garnerer with a pride and satisfaction born of the superstition that he originated them; whereas there is not a rag of originality about them anywhere except the little discoloration they get from his mental and moral caliber and his temperament, and which is revealed in characteristics of phrasing. Old and new make the warp and woof of every moment. There is no thread that is not a twist of these two strands. By necessity, by proclivity, and by delight, we all quote. Neurological study has lately shown that memory, imagination, and consciousness itself is stitched, quilted, pastiched. If we cut-and-paste our selves, might we not forgive it of our artworks?

Artists and writers—and our advocates, our guilds and agents—too often subscribe to implicit claims of originality that do injury to these truths. And we too often, as hucksters and bean counters in the tiny enterprises of our selves, act to spite the gift portion of our privileged roles. People live differently who treat a portion of their wealth as a gift. If we devalue and obscure the gift-economy function of our art practices, we turn our works into nothing more than advertisements for themselves. We may console ourselves that our lust for subsidiary rights in virtual perpetuity is some heroic counter to rapacious corporate interests. But the truth is that with artists pulling on one side and corporations pulling on the other, the loser is the collective public imagination from which we were nourished in the first place, and whose existence as the ultimate repository of our offerings makes the work worth doing in the first place.

An immodest proposal

Helprin desires PermaCopyright for his original work. So do many lyricists and poets, and other creative artists. Well, **why not?**

Here’s a modest change in U.S. copyright law:

- Any work asserted to be wholly original can be maintained under copyright indefinitely.
- Any work admitted to be partially or wholly derivative is protected under copyright for 28 years (or 40 years or other plausible term).

When you create a work, you either assert that it is wholly original and get PermaCopyright, or you say nothing and get Founder’s Copyright.

Of course, the words in that first bullet need to be defined.

- **Wholly original:** No significant part of this work can be found in any previous work. Pe-

riod. If one percent of the sentences or five percent of the plot in your novel appeared previously (in one work or many—why should pastiches get more protection than straightforward copying?), if two seconds of your three-minute song is recognizable as a melody or chord sequence from other music, if a significant portion of the dialogue, scenes, plot or characterization in your movie is recognizable from other movies (or books or...) then your work is **not** wholly original. I'm sure we can arrive at similar "levels of unoriginality" for paintings, sculpture, nonfiction and the like. (Nonfiction's tough: You can't copyright facts, so you're presumably claiming that your sentences explaining those facts are wholly original. Good luck.) Oh, and by the way, either there's a fine for falsely claiming originality (or persecution for perjury) or, at the very least, your derivative work loses *any* copyright protection since it was protected under false pretenses.

- **Maintained under copyright:** PermaCopyright requires government resources, just as communities composed of houses do. Those who desire PermaCopyright should pay for those resources—just as homeowners in communities do. Thus, a reasonable annual fee should be part of the process of maintaining indefinite copyright. After all, why should intellectual property be treated *more* advantageously than real property? Fail to pay the annual fee, you lose the PermaCopyright.

Seems straightforward to me. Truly original artists could get their desires: everlasting copyright. Those who create by building on the works of others would get plenty of protection to earn royalties for their partly-creative work, albeit not for absurdly long terms. Who could oppose this reasonable legislation?

Other extremes

Masnick noted the formation of a new copyright alliance—indeed, that's the name. You'll find the Copyright Alliance's website at www.copyrightalliance.org. It was founded in May 2007 by "29 member organizations from the worlds of entertainment, arts, technology and sports" and claims to represent "an estimated 11 million Americans working in copyright-related industries."

The stated principles of the alliance seem entirely desirable until you read them carefully—e.g., "To

promote the progress of science and creativity, as enumerated in the U.S. Constitution, by upholding **and strengthening** copyright law and preventing its diminishment" (emphasis added). The membership roster is interesting: For example, in addition to MPAA as one member, we have the parent companies of studios as individual members. As far as "technology" is concerned, that's primarily the Software & Information Industry Association, Business Software Alliance and Entertainment Software Association, all traditionally copyright hardliners (and, sigh, Microsoft). You won't find the Consumer Electronics Association or other similar associations in this group. AAP's there, as is RIAA; so are BMI, ASCAP, the Magazine Publishers of America, Major League Baseball, the National Association of Broadcasters and various companies and associations. I don't see the Writers' Guild or other associations of writers—but you can be sure the Directors' Guild of America is represented. So far, "Our Staff" seems to be one executive director at least on the web page, although a news release mentions a PR person.

Here's what the Copyright Alliance says of anyone who expresses doubts about extreme copyright:

Have you ever heard somebody say, "Of course, we want to see artists get paid," and then they follow that with a phrase beginning with "but"? Generally the "but" and what follows it, implies a belief that copyright protections are not really important any more. That belief can begin to erode or even eliminate the intellectual property rights accorded to creators in the U.S. Constitution and through global treaties. The U.S. Congress in 1790—in one of its first major acts—passed the first Copyright Act. They did that because they felt it was vital to a newly created and growing country that embodied a belief in the rights of the individual. That wisdom is as true today. If anyone ever says they want to see artists get paid, remind them we already have a system that does that, and it has been doing so successfully for 217 years. It has helped make our American creative culture unique and great, and it will continue to do so.

No admission that the first copyright act offered 28 years' protection *with* registration, none without. No possibility that "but" could include "not for absurdly long times past the death of the artist." Nope. You're 100% with CA or you're against copyright: The simple, black-and-white world of extremists.

Is there a connection between CA and Helprin? Well, the "Documents and Research" page begins "Below are **our** most recently added documents and research" (emphasis added) and offers three links, the second of which is Helprin's article. The first is

“Thoughts on orphan works” by Richard Weisgrau, a photographer—and it’s an interesting piece of work (www.stockphotographer.info/content/view/529/99/) posted June 5, 2007. Weisgrau assures us that he’s “no longer an advocate for any cause.” But his discussion of orphan works legislation begins with this sentence: “Last year, independent creators of copyright-protected works were threatened by legislation that came to be known as the Orphan Works Bill.” In my vocabulary, “threatened” is a word ripe with the smell of advocacy. Weisgrau says he’s all for “properly drafted” Orphan Works legislation—but only with the right “compromises.”

A lovely bit of selective quotation comes at the beginning of “The purpose of copyright law,” when Weisgrau quotes the Constitutional basis for copyright. In full: “to promote the progress of science and the useful arts.” Not a word about “limited time” and nowhere in the essay is there recognition that U.S. copyright was always intended to have time limits. Since he says, “Valuable IP has always been and will continue to be in demand,” I’m not convinced that’s an oversight.

So what are Weisgrau’s compromises? First, orphan works can only be used for “educational and informational uses that serve the public interest”—no advertising or promoting “products, services, ideas or concepts.” Second, an international internet registry of copyright holders with contact information—but not the works they hold. Third, an internet database of “desired orphan works”—and here’s a second trap. You want to use an orphan work? You pay a fee and post a digital copy or descriptive information. *Then you wait*—until some “certain waiting period” elapses and you get to use the work or until a copyright-holder contacts you and licenses the work (or refuses). Finally, an International Standard Copyright Number to eventually “reduce dependency on the orphan works database.”

The second and third items might be part of a workable Orphan Works system—but the first exclusion is so broad as to undercut the whole concept, particularly when “promoting...ideas or concepts” is included. In fact, apart from that poisonous sentence on the Orphan Works bill “threatening” creators and Weisgrau’s, um, accidental omission of the limited-time aspect of the copyright clause, this is not a particularly extreme paper.

The third link is a report by Stephen E. Siwek, “Copyright industries in the U.S. economy.” It’s a slick

PDF from the International Intellectual Property Alliance on how much “copyright industries” contribute to the economy. One can always argue about secondary impact, and one can *certainly* argue that balanced copyright would not significantly reduce that contribution (and could increase it), but in any case it’s a supporting document clearly created before the formation of the Copyright Alliance.

CA may be worth watching. It’s fair to assume it won’t be lobbying for increased fair use or shorter copyright terms.

Three extreme items—one of them a spoof

Here are three items. One of them is a spoof. Can you tell which one?

- The proposed “Intellectual Property Protection Act” would make not only copyright infringement, but *attempted* copyright infringement a crime, add seizure and forfeiture of property “used, or intended to be used, in any manner or any part, to commit or facilitate the commission of a violation” and clarify that registration of a work is not required for criminal prosecution of infringement.
- The MPAA is lobbying for legislation to make unauthorized home theaters illegal. Any hardware manufactured in the future would contain technology notifying the MPAA of what is being shown and details of the audience. Anyone with a home theater (defined as a home with a TV larger than 29", with stereo sound and at least two comfortable chairs, couch or futon) would need to pay a \$50 registration fee or face fines of up to \$500,000 per movie shown. An MPAA spokesperson noted, “Ideally we expect each viewer to have their own copy of the DVD, but we realize that isn’t always feasible. The registration fee is a fair compromise.”
- The RIAA is getting ready to push legislation repealing the “exemption” that allows radio stations to play recorded music without paying performance royalties. (Songwriters and publishers already receive royalties.) Congressman “Hollywood Howard” Berman will lead the fight. Mary Wilson of the Supremes says it’s unfair for radio stations not to pay, forcing older musicians to continue touring to pay their bills. “After so many years of not being compensated, it would be nice now at this

late date to at least start,” the 63-year-old Wilson said from Milwaukee, where she was performing at the Potawatomi Bingo Casino.

One of those is phony. Two are real. Can you tell the difference?

Protecting creative property effectively...

There's more than one way to push copyright way over toward one side, as Julie Hilden demonstrates in a January 29, 2007 *FindLaw's Writ* essay, “Answering the multi-billion-dollar question: Important lessons for companies seeking to protect creative property effectively in the twenty-first century” (writ.lp.findlaw.com/hilden/20070108.html) Note that we're talking *companies* here, not *creators*. It's a breathtaking set of strategies, one that librarians should find particularly fascinating for its implications.

The First Sale Doctrine Must Die

First, I believe content companies will have to effectively modify—through federal legislation—the traditional first-sale doctrine in copyright law.

Quite a start. “Companies must at least explore means to ensure that they can reap revenue from multiple users, or even from a single user's multiple uses of their content.” So mean ol' Netflix won't gain a “huge windfall.” Per-use charges “could make pricing more efficient”—and you presumably know that in economic charges “efficient” means extracting every possible dollar, “what the market will bear.” And of course it's “fair” to the “creator”—never mind that the benefits would go almost entirely to corporations.

The only question is whether consumers will accept a model other than the first-sale model. Instead, they may continue to view the first-sale model as inherently more fair. After all, to my knowledge, it's been the only model offered (ever since the advent of phonograph recordings for sale a century ago). Moreover, and largely as a result, consumers' concept of ownership resides in physical objects—such as records, CDs, or DVDs—not in viewings or experiences.

Oddly, content is, in a way, a service in the form of a good: It is bought as an object, but then it entertains us just as a live performer might. The challenge for capturing more revenue is convincing users to see content more as a service, than a good. That perspective might then convince users to give up their stake in the first-sale doctrine, in exchange for a fairer pricing system.

One would think this column should have been published in 1984. “Get fairer pricing: Give up actually *owning* a record or movie or book...” If you believe a pay-per-use system would result in lower costs for the average citizen—oh, sorry, “consumer”—there's some

lovely marshland next to my current place of work that I'd be happy to lease you. I don't own it, but I can lease you the concept of preferred viewing rights. The “service, not good” argument could be applied to nearly any object: You could charge a fee for every item cooked on a stove (preparing meals is a service, just as in restaurants), for example.

The second idea seems plausible: “Competition with copyright infringing outlets must be low in price and immediate.” Taken on its own, it's hard to argue with that one. So I won't. But then there's the third:

The Book Industry Should Transition to Paperback Originals and Also Eliminate the First-Sale Doctrine

I've only briefly mentioned the book industry, but it's of particular interest to me, as an author. I support the shift to paperback originals, for the same reason I support limited simultaneous theatrical/DVD release: Both remove artificial restraints on content distribution.

I also have come to support an end of the first-sale doctrine for books, even though it concerns me that libraries will be hurt. I would support lower prices or exemptions for libraries, but in the end, it is so much fairer to price books on a per-reader basis, that I'm persuaded the first-sale doctrine must go.

“Even though it concerns me that libraries will be hurt.” **Hurt** is, to be sure, not quite the right word.

Looking back through the last six or eight months of Hilden's columns, I don't see many that deal with copyright—although when there are such columns, she consistently uses scare quotes around the term fair use and seems satisfied that the Constitutional aim of copyright is to protect profit, which I suppose could be one reading of “promote progress.”

Kahle v. Gonzales: No Luck on Terms

In January 2007, a court of appeals dismissed *Kahle v. Gonzales*, an attempt to roll back copyright term extensions for works that are no longer in print or are orphaned. The court concluded that the new case made substantially the same argument as *Eldred v. Ashcroft* (which attempted to overturn copyright term extension in general) and saw no reason to come to a different decision.

In a January 25, 2007 post at *lessig blog* (www.lessig.org/blog/), Lawrence Lessig expressed surprise in the reasoning of the opinion (although not the decision itself, given the way oral arguments had gone). He thought this case was “plainly different” from *Eldred*. He believes that challenging the change from “opt-in” (copyright registration) to “opt-out” (automatic protection unless you explicitly waive

copyright) is substantially different from anything previously decided; the court does not. The post goes into more detail as to why the cases should have been different—and why, in the long run, the 20-year extension may be less important than the change to automatic copyright without registration.

Ultimately, this seems to be a losing battle. The courts defer to Congress on copyright term and extent; that seems unlikely to change short of Congress actually adopting eternal copyright.

The spoof...

"MPAA lobbying for home theater regulations" appeared at *BBspot* (www.bbspot.com). *BBspot* is a humor site. The other two are certainly not *intended* as humor—one from the draft bill itself, one from a Los Angeles *Times* story.

Making it Work

The overall theme for this set of posts and commentary is balance: personal balance, attempting to stay current, balancing old and new services and patron groups. If you hear a hidden message, "Buy *Balanced Libraries: Thoughts on Continuity and Change*, lulu.com/waltcrawford," that's true enough. You can think of these posts (and commentary) as extending the discussion in that book.

Keeping Up, Falling Back & Staying Sane

Laura Crossett leads off with "leaving the league of awesomeness," an April 25, 2007 post at *lis.dom* (www.newrambler.net). She speaks of success and "failure." Success:

I just got home from a hugely successful program at the library. Tom Rea, a writer from Casper, came to talk about Ella Watson, also known as "Cattle Kate." Thirty people packed the library—we ran out of regular chairs and had people sitting on the little kids' chairs, but no one seemed to mind. I rigged up a screen (there was a miscommunication about what equipment was needed) by securing our aged tiny screen to the ceiling with the aid of a spare computer cord and a double half hitch.

"Failure":

When Michael Porter (also known as Libraryman) sent out an invitation to join the 365 Library Days project, I jumped all over it, because, as they say, it was new and shiny, and because I sure do love Flickr, and because, as Steve Lawson put it, I wanted to be a part of the League of Awesomeness. A few weeks in, though, and I'm realizing that not only am I not going to be able to take all the pictures because of my damn camera batteries, but

also that I am not going to be able to take them all simply because I have too much else to do, and while Flickr-ing 365 days in the library will make me look awesome in the world of librarians who Flickr, it won't mean much of anything to the population I serve.

Crossett balanced "library awesomeness" against the needs of her patrons—and "the population I serve" won. Crossett's in Meeteetse, Wyoming, population 351, with median household income around \$30,000. In a town that size, she manages a library with 25,000 volumes, open 44 hours a week, with a monthly book discussion group, a weekly story time and more.

We manage to do a lot of things, but we can't do everything. It behooves me to remember the things that I am good at but also the things that I'm not. I'm good at giving teenagers the space to do their own thing in peace. I'm not so good at engaging them and getting them to come to organized events. I'm pretty good at ordering a selection of books that is—I hope—both broad and deep in all the right places for this community. I suck at getting those books read. I'm good at taking pictures of silly inanimate things that amuse me. I'm not so good at getting people to participate in pictures meant to go online.

She thinks (I agree) 365 Library Days is "a cool project" that "could potentially be a great way to get some news coverage for your library." I know from experience that Crossett is engaged—engaged in blogging, engaged in discussing contemporary library issues, engaged in making it work. In this case, she retained balance by stepping back:

I'm going to go back to ordering books and trying to read more of them, thinking about summer reading, and wondering if it's really essential for me to convince people that Firefox is so much better than Internet Explorer—another thing I turn out not to be good at.

Michael Porter and Steve Lawson both wrote nice comments—and both agree that her library is in the "league of awesomeness" given what she's doing in a small community. Porter appreciated "that you would talk about your decision in a blog post"—as do I. Lawson noted the need to think about "doing what we are good at vs. doing what seems cool vs. doing what our patrons really need us to be doing," with Crossett firmly in that last camp. I noted:

This is only a failure in the most literal sense. You tried something, you looked at your community's needs and priorities and your resources, and you decided not to pursue it. I'd call it a balanced decision. I suspect Michael would agree.

Librarians keeping up and making time

I don't normally follow Emily Clasper's *Library revolution* (libraryrevolution.com), but Michael Casey quoted

four points from this April 26, 2007 post (in which another librarian complained that she didn't have time to read "all those blogs and online articles and research and stuff"), and I think they're worth noting. Extensive excerpts:

1. **It really doesn't take that much time.** I have all of my subscriptions in my aggregator, and I peruse them when I'm on the phone with people, killing a few minutes before a meeting, and (gasp!) at home when I'm not actually "on the clock." If something looks really interesting and I don't have time for an in-depth read, I keep it as new and hit it later. And if I don't have time, I don't sweat it. Or I just dump some of the more expendable stuff. And I don't sweat that, either.

2. **We need to keep informed.** Sometimes librarians get so busy "doing our jobs" that we forget the responsibility we have to our profession. And a big part of being good professionals is keeping current and well informed, even if it takes you away from day-to-day tasks now and then, and even if it means you have to devote some of your personal time to doing so.

3. **We need to rethink our priorities.** I think this is true for most of us in life, not just librarians. But when you find that you are missing out on something important in your profession because you "don't have time," I think some of the things that are eating up your time need to be reevaluated...

4. **Employers and supervisors need to support professional development...**

It really *doesn't* take that much time—particularly because *nobody* needs to keep up on everything in detail.

If I just had 15 minutes each day

Meredith Farkas ponders what she would do if that was her limit in this April 26, 2007 post at *Information wants to be free* (meredith.wolfwater.com). In part:

Keep up with just a few blogs that are less about ideas and issues and more about new tools and great applications of technology in libraries... There are a lot of interesting discussions going on and questions being asked in the blogosphere, but if you have 15 minutes, you just don't have time for all that. Focus on tools and concrete examples...

Obviously the blogs you choose to follow will depend on your interests... And even within these blogs, you don't have to read everything in-depth. Skim what's less important and focus on what is really important to you. Only follow links that look like they might be useful. Especially follow links to libraries using cool technologies...

Once in a while, you may want to chunk four of your 15 minute sessions together and watch...a Webcast [Farkas cites several series]. Some of these Webcasts offer a 1-hour look at a specific technology and how it can be used in libraries. That one session will probably be worth days and days-worth of exploring.

The rest of your time should be spent actually using technologies. Try out some of these things... The value of actually using these tools is enormous. By using them, you will better understand their possibilities and limitations, their pros and cons. You'll be better able to decide if this is something you might want to explore further for use in your library...

One thing to remember: there are a lot of cool tools out there, but you should focus on what you think would actually be useful to you in your professional or personal life. I often hear about tools that I don't even bother to look at because I know from a one sentence description that I don't need it...

Keeping up in 15 minutes per day? It all comes down to being focused, being ruthless, and aware of the needs of your patrons and your colleagues...

Amanda Robertson notes this post in "some thoughts on Web 2.0," posted April 27, 2007 at *Data obsessed* (data-obsessed.renji.org). Robertson spends more than 15 minutes a day but recognizes that it *can* be done:

The trick is in limiting yourself. I have 52 blogs in my newsgator account filed under Libraries / Information / Knowledge. If you've only got fifteen minutes, don't do that. Pick five or six, and as Meredith says, make them very focused on your interests. And after you've done that, play...

I have more than 350 library blogs and more than 400 blogs total in my Bloglines list—but that's because I treat those blogs as source material and professional reading. If I had 15 minutes a day, I'd trim that list to 20 or 30. Robertson offers another important comment relating to Library 2.0 and the felt need to do everything:

I think the real key point that sometimes gets lost in the This Is The Future And We Have To Keep On Top Of It is...this is supposed to be fun. Don't stick with a tool if playing with it bores you to tears or if you can't see yourself ever using it. I have a Flickr account I usually forget about. But Writely/Google Docs? For me, one of the most awesome things ever. There's enough toys out there for everyone to be able to find something for them. The trick is playing around long enough to find it.

How do you know you've been passed by?

Laura Cohen asks that question in a May 15, 2007 post at *Library 2.0: an academic's perspective* (liblogs.albany.edu/library20/). Cohen points out that you have to know what "the right thing" is to know that you've missed that particular bus. How do you know? Some of her thoughts:

What's right for you is your context. This includes your mission and library-wide goals. It also includes your assessment of user needs, and a strong understanding of the technologies that might accommodate these needs...

...You need staff that stays on top of things. You need people with a clear-eyed view of your specific situation, and the creativity, vision and will to propose initiatives. You need a culture that encourages and accommodates proposals that bubble up from below...

I've been trying to think of a formula that summarizes this. I've come up with the Three A's.

Assessment. Library staff assesses the needs of its users and the current technology scene. These findings are considered in the context of the library's mission, current offerings and capabilities. Bottom line, *this activity never stops*.

Agreement. Administration and staff come to an agreement about the technology initiatives they want to pursue.

Action. The library creates the conditions necessary for implementation. Implementations proceed.

It may look easy, but of course it's not. It takes a lot of hard, ceaseless work...

I would also argue that, in spite of your best efforts, right technologies *will* pass you by. You'll never be able to do it all. You can't, and you shouldn't...There will also be compromises. Sometimes there are things that are simply out of reach. Maybe the definition of "right" is based on a hearty realism mixed in with the best that you can do.

Context, keeping up as an *overall* activity, user needs, compromise: All part of a balanced approach.

Isn't taking the profession home enough?

"Hedgehog librarian" (hedgehoglibrarian.blogspot.com) feels the need to maintain some kind of separation between work and home in this June 3, 2007 post.

Some articles and other postings... suggest that an attitude such as this (not being at work 24/7) means that a worker is unmotivated and will not succeed in the workplace. I see it as a difference between the job being a major part of my life and being all of my life. I participate in [lists], catch up on my blogs and do what professional development I can when I'm at home—mostly because I'm not allocated any time to do this at work. I know others who only respond to [lists] or read RSS feeds that are "library-related" at work so that they have time away from it. Are they not involved? No, they just have a different perception on when they need to stop "library stuff" for the day.

I think I surprised/confused a coworker by bluntly stating that I didn't like taking things home with me. I'll work late or come in early to finish up a project as necessary, but I believe work should stay at work and not follow me home to tire me out there. While, to me, my profession and professional development don't shut off—my "job" can. I think it makes me a better worker when it's not following me around all the time.

I've been spouting off about the need to take breaks for years. Beyond vacations and "serious breaks,"

many people *do* need some separation between work and home (even if they "keep up" at home). That's not being unprofessional, it's being balanced.

Being a librarian on the bleeding edge

Continuing in a more personal vein, Michelle McLean, the *Connecting librarian* (connectinglibrarian.blogspot.com) posts this long discussion of her problems in trying to do *everything* and keep up (relating to Emily Casper's post above and to excellent posts by Meredith Farkas and Sarah Houghton-Jan that aren't discussed here). Excerpts:

When I first started reading blogs about 4 years ago, I started small and never thought I would go much higher than the 20 I ended up with then. Small and manageable and still giving me what I thought I needed from them. I added some out of my field, just to get a bit of the wider picture, then found more Australian blogs so feeling patriotic and interested, I added them to my feeds. My current list sits at 110, which includes the feeds for the blogs I contribute to... That list has been weeded down some recently and I plan to weed it down more. I survived whilst on my study tour with only 24 feeds in my reader and although there were some that I missed, generally I survived. As many bloggers have pointed out, if there is something special out there, another blogger will draw your attention to it...

One of my managers said to me again recently that I was on the bleeding edge of what is happening in libraries and that makes me a valuable asset to the library. When she first said it, I took some pride in it, but now I am not so sure.

I love being a part of the blogosphere and discovering all the new things that libraries are doing, but in the past year I have been feeling more of a responsibility to do so, for my library and not just for my own interest. Having that expansion means that my frustration with being one of the only ones out there on the edge at my workplace is magnified...

I love my work and I am passionate about Library 2.0, but I don't have enough time to be on the bleeding edge of everything that it encompasses. We have so much change going on at work and that can be a very painful process for some to go through and painful for people like me to wait for them to catch up...

So I will do what I can. First I will set myself some realistic goals—both at work and at home. (besides my family coming first regardless—which unfortunately hasn't always been the case recently) That will probably mean cutting back on more feeds, really thinking about new technologies and what they will mean for me and my workplace before getting involved and more...

McLean's done the most important thing: Recognized that she can't do everything *and* maintain any kind of life balance. Given that, I have no doubt that (as she

projects) she will “regain her optimism” and the passion she has for her work and professional interests. Cutting back and focusing is frequently an essential step toward doing more, more effectively.

I am a cyber-quitter

What better way to close this section than with a detailed admission from a self-proclaimed perfectionist: “We...are going to have to make serious downward adjustments in our standards, should we wish to survive the new reality of the web”? So says Cindi in this June 14, 2007 post at *Chronicles of Bean* (already-gone.blogspot.com), her “top ten failed web efforts.”

She’s largely abandoned accounts at MySpace, Joost, LiveJournal, Tumblr and “countless others” I’ve never even heard of. She’s learning to ignore (I believe) “Google Reader’s constant taunts of (100+) [unread blog posts], not to mention all those starred items I never went back and fully parsed.” She’s given up tracking interesting OpenURL bits—and she’s set aside “grand plans for participating in reference and professional development activities in Second Life” in favor of “well, my first one.”

She’s still on Twitter but has a love-hate relationship with it. (Ask me about that in August.) She created a *Wikipedia* account but has made only a few edits. And, #1 on the list, here’s another 365 Days participant who couldn’t hack it, if only because “it was taking me upwards of two hours to do the ones of which I was most proud.” There’s more, to be sure—a list that shows how easily we can get involved in more things than we can *possibly* do well.

The Old and the New

Steven Bell asks, “So what if we do pander to students” in a March 26, 2007 post at *ACRLLog* (acrlblog.org). Noting a debate over the future of reference desks and connecting with users on their own turf,

I said this was especially important for millennial generation students because we couldn’t expect them to come to the library to wait for an authority figure behind a desk to provide answers. An attendee, during the questioning period, asked if that point was just another way of saying that we should pander to students who wanted it their way. This individual claimed that students come to college to learn how to deal with the real world, and that by bending over backwards to accommodate students who expect to get it their way wherever and whenever they want it we were actually doing them a disservice.

...I responded that it was perhaps best not to think of it as pandering, but rather being student focused and

shifting our ways of doing business to meet the needs of our students. To that I added that reaching out to students in their places, whether it be classrooms, dorms, cafeterias, or academic departments, made sense in today’s mobile society...

So while I’m generally not in favor of pandering or kowtowing to students just to get them to acknowledge we exist, I do think it makes good sense to re-engineer reference services so that we are providing it to the user community on their turf. You can avoid doing so, if you think this is pandering, at risk of your own obsolescence.

The first comment (from Lisa Hinchliffe) offers a good “non-pandering” response: “I’d ask what ‘business’ we are in—teaching students to do better research and find good information or teaching them to come to a desk to ask questions?” Another ten comments raise interesting issues (some related to the debate itself), and one from Elena O’Malley pointed up an interesting balance issue—although perhaps not related to reference desks as such:

We don’t just serve the millennial generation, and college presidents, alumni, faculty, and staff won’t all die off or stop using the library in the next five years. Some of those categories of folks (including the millennial generation) will adopt and have adopted mobile technology and want to text us, but some of them will still be quite upset ten years from now if they walk into the library and there’s no one physically there to work with them.

We usually only get to add more services—we almost never get to drop one.

Candice Benjes-Small agreed that reference needs to move beyond the desk (which doesn’t necessarily mean abandoning the desk) but added another comment that really belongs in a later section of this essay:

I hope to never, ever hear again about how “millennials” are so different.

The “nontraditional” Gen X and Baby Boomer aged students (and faculty!) seem to appreciate our coming to them instead of forcing them trudge to the desk. I think it has nothing whatsoever to do with the generation and everything to do with customer service... The world has changed and it’s not generation specific.

And I bet that “pandering” comment was from someone who is just as sick of hearing about generations and libraries as I am.

What are we for, revisited

Pete Smith posted this on April 23, 2007 at *Library Too* (havemercia.wordpress.com). It’s worth reading in full; it’s not long. Excerpts:

Are libraries about information? No; at least that shouldn’t be their focus

Are libraries ‘just’ for books? No

Should they be ‘mainly’ about books? For now, yes
Should they be about ‘anything we can think of? No

There has to be a limit to what libraries are charged with doing, be that by government, commentators or librarians... [Omitted: Smith’s take on what they should and should not be about: Go read the post.]

Libraries have their part to play in various schemes etc, but they do that best by being good libraries. Anything that happens in them should contribute to that; not to numbers, not to getting ‘em in so we can sell ‘em something else.

If libraries are everything, eventually they will be nothing.

I feel as though that last sentence should be engraved in bronze somewhere.

Library as place-with-books

Which segues back to *ACRlog*, this time an April 24, 2007 post by Barbara Fister. You really should **read the whole post**. She notes a *Harper’s* article that concludes by quoting a library director saying an academic library is “not so much a space where books are held as where ideas are shared,” to which the writer (Gideon Lewis-Kraus) comments:

This is odd. Most people might suppose, to the contrary, that a library is *exactly* a space where books are held. There are many places on a college campus where ideas are shared: lecture halls, seminar rooms, computer clusters, dorm lounges. The library happens to be the only where ideas are shared precisely *because* books are held.

Some of Fister’s following comments:

So here’s my question: as we pay attention to the “library as place” and try to demolish the “warehouse for books” stereotype of libraries, do we have any evidence that what’s *in* the library is contributing to the conversations we hope to foster? That is, as the library becomes a better place for students to do a variety of things, are they making better use of the collection itself? How well do collection development, information literacy, and “library as place” work together? What assessments have been made that can establish some causality—a better place means better learning using what libraries have to offer?

I always wonder about the wisdom of “demolishing” the “warehouse for books” rather than building on it, but in any case Fister raises good questions—and Lewis-Kraus raises an interesting point. Fister makes a particularly interesting observation in responding to one of the comments on the post: “It makes me think that we should not inadvertently dismiss some patrons’ interest in books as we advertise new services or design libraries to respond to non-bookish interests. We do often act as if books are *so* last year.” She goes on to say that the print/digital dichotomy is “of course” a false one—but it’s one that certainly seems

evident in many comments from some academic librarians (and very few public librarians).

Library books versus gaming

Michael Westfall posted this as a guest post at *Tame the web* on May 15, 2007 (tametheweb.com); as he says in the lead sentence, “A blog post describing a teacher’s personal reservations about allowing students certain types of technology use, on a blog site that promotes technology and libraries may seem paradoxical.” Westfall’s an LIS student at Dominican and an elementary school media information specialist. Here’s his issue, noting that he’s in a school library: “I don’t like kids playing games on the computers in my library because I feel it is at the expense of the reading of books.”

It’s a full-page post, **well worth reading**. Westfall’s “not anti-computer, a killjoy, or a raving modern-day Luddite.” His library has a fully functional computer lab and he’s worked with students to make PowerPoint presentations and use clipart in documents—but this “engaged time” is, to Westfall, different than gaming because it “produces tangible products, something I can view, enjoy, and assess.”

At heart I am a book person...I’ve worked hard to find and add to the collection books that kids request or show an interest in, and I have been heartened by the reactions of many students to this throughout the year... What frightens me is that many of my students have significant difficulty reading and comprehending text online, whether it’s a Wikipedia entry, an advertisement, or even detailed directions for a game. Many of them just don’t seem to get that to use the internet you have to read... I believe my personal conflict raises a serious question: how to fully use limited school library time on two very different activities—building reading comprehension skills through engagement with books, or fostering the strategizing, problem-solving, and collaborative skills that gaming is supposed to aide in developing.

The comments offer a variety of perspectives; you should read those as well. I’m not qualified to comment on the issue of gaming in school libraries. I suspect it’s different (and more difficult in some ways) than gaming in public libraries. In any case, Westfall raises difficult balance issues worth thinking about.

Libraries: Good, cheap, but not fast

Jeff Scott posted this at *Gather no dust* (gathernodust.blogspot.com) on May 19, 2007. Scott discusses the common theme that you can choose any two of good, cheap and fast but not all three, noting that most libraries choose good and cheap. He’s interested

in the claims that patrons would be willing to pay for better services, noting “This sentiment is often not shown through taxes”—and says something more interesting about some of these claims and calls for faster service even at a price:

Interestingly enough, this request for fast service, or convenience, comes from non-users. This makes the decision even more difficult as one risks losing the existing users to go after non-users. Nothing miffs patrons more than the dismantling of an existing and popular service. This is magnified if the dismantling comes at the behest of a perceived “progress.”

Scott “get[s] frustrated reading librarian bloggers lament about how their local libraries should do A, B, and C.”

This complaint often goes out on his or her blog instead of trying to create the change locally. I am a big believer of “Think Globally, Act Locally,” so when I see a blog post about it, my first thought is, what did this person do to try to create that change... Many libraries do what they do according to a strategic plan... If you are looking to create change in your local library, this is something to review...

However, you are at a disadvantage if you are just starting to use the local public library. *Existing patrons beat you.* They have already made the library their own. If you haven’t been using us already, you are in the minority... [Emphasis added.]

When a liblogger asserts that public libraries don’t matter to most people or fail to serve most of the public, that’s a factual assertion directly open to challenge—and Scott, with 24,000 library cards in a service area of 38,000, *does* challenge it...and challenges demands for new services and new convenience from non-users. There’s one more thing about pushes for new services in libraries with limited resources:

You need to ask. Not only that, you need to ask and **use it!** Nothing is more annoying than a patron who comes in to demand a service or a book, then when we do it, no one shows up to the program and no one checks out the book (the patron just thought we should have it). Libraries don’t have endless resources, they need the constant push to get them to do what you want *and* you have to use it. Otherwise, we look like we are wasting our time.

Exciting wallpaper

That’s the title of Joseph Janes’ “Internet librarian” column in the May 2007 *American Libraries*. It’s the subtitle that got me: “The challenge of staying current yet keeping what works.”

Janes recounts a DIG_REF debate on “the relative merits of commercial digital-reference software and off-the-shelf instant messaging tools.” Noting topics in a discussion on digital reference at Midwinter, he says:

All important, all valuable, all to the good—although I couldn’t help thinking that those themes could just as easily be the list of topics covered in a discussion three years ago or more.

Does this mean that digital reference has run out of steam, that those heady days of excitement are over? Hardly. But neither does it mean that there’s nothing left to be done, and these are just production systems facing the typical day-to-day maintenance and management needs.

“Digital” reference (but really, we all know that it’s all “reference,” right?) needs to continue to grow and develop. It also needs to continue to perform; the techniques and tools of reference work using digital tools have become firmly ingrained in the practice of reference in general, and services can’t solely be lurching from fad to fad. By the same token, they can’t abandon innovation either.

The same is true for any other aspect of librarianship in the 21st century...

“Services can’t solely be lurching from fad to fad. By the same token, they can’t abandon innovation either.”

Speaking of reality, read Roy Tennant’s “Of real and digital libraries” in the May 15, 2007 *Library Journal*. Tennant has “extoll[ed] the benefits and virtues of digital collections and services” for nearly a decade, and here he turns that around: “Without real libraries, digital ones are nothing but a bunch of bits... Digital libraries require real ones in a way that real libraries will never need the digital.”

Shorter notes on excellent posts

Abigail Bordeaux posted “Driving emerging tech” on May 18, 2007 at *Ab’s Blog* (abigailbordeaux.net). It’s a good read, stressing the need to focus on what we want to get done rather than the technologies at hand, but I specifically want to quote one sentence in the final paragraph:

I have wondered if the reason we can get so focused on trying new apps is because it’s a lot easier than some of the alternatives, such as meeting regularly with every faculty member in one’s subject area, or putting together a first-class marketing campaign, or trying to convince the powers that be to get librarians into every single freshman composition class.

Kathryn Greenhill offers *two* perspectives on Second Life on April 30 and May 1, 2007 at *Librarians matter* (librariansmatter.com): ten reasons your library *should* be in SL—and six “very bad reasons” to have an SL branch. The first post suggests great benefits to *librarians* in “getting a Second Life”—but limited benefits to patrons “at the moment.” The ten good reasons relate to learning new things, relating to new groups of users, networking, collaboration and flexibility. The

second points out some real-world limitations, at least for now: Your patrons *aren't* in SL to any significant degree; the presence of big corporations there (with empty stores) means nothing to library services; SL only provides more access for the most advantaged patrons; and, if you must be in SL, you might be better off taking part in an existing SL service. But that's a terrible summary; if you're feeling the urge to spend library time and money on SL, **go read the posts.**

Finally, Martha Hardy posted "Library [lists]: Not dead yet?" at *The vital library* (vitallibrary.blogspot.com) on April 22, 2007. [Editorial note: I change the trademark "Listserv™" to the generic [list] or its plural.] This is a class-related post (she was assigned to monitor Web4Lib and describe the differences between blogs and electronic discussion groups) and a good one. Here are the boldface points, each followed by one or more paragraphs of discussion:

Electronic discussion groups tend to be more formal than blogs.

Blogs are generally created by a single author or small group of authors, while electronic discussion lists are products of a specific community.

Electronic discussion groups are text only.

[Lists] have longevity.

Before discussing those points, she concludes, "Both remain useful and used for at least the near future."

Interesting & Peculiar Products Round PCs!

There's nothing new about a PC designed to be part of an entertainment center. PCs in the shape of audio components have been around for a while, usually running Windows Media Center. The Sony VAIO VGX-TP1 is a little different though: It's a *cylinder*, 10.6" in diameter and less than 4" high. \$1,600 gets you a dual-core Intel CPU, 2GB RAM, a 300GB hard disk, multiformat DVD burner (what? no Blu-ray?), wireless and Windows Vista Home Premium. Naturally there's a wireless keyboard and a remote. It's also designed to run "whisper quiet."

\$1,600 isn't cheap for a system with no HD drive and no display, but it's a decently equipped (one might even say "well rounded") system. The white-gray cylinder (*PC World's* description) may be "designed to fit unobtrusively into your living room, or any other room where you watch TV." But does a round form factor make sense? How many round au-

dio-video components or set-top boxes do you have—other than maybe a portable CD player?

Unwired Everything?

The April 2007 *Business 2.0* features a two-page writeup on Powercast, "a technology that replaces electrical wires." That's the claim: A transmitter plugs into the wall and a "dime-size receiver" costing \$5 to make can be part of any low-voltage device—cell phone, PDA, lighting, wireless keyboard. The secret, supposedly, is a receiver with "tiny but hyperefficient" receiving circuits to capture all that energy that bounces off walls from the transmitter—and all with "safe low wattages." You have to be within three feet of the transmitter.

I can't prove that this *can't* work, but it has one of two possibilities written all over it:

- **Incredible waste of electricity** if the receiver's converting broadcast RF to electricity. Let's say you have five devices within a three-foot-radius circle of the transmitter. That means the transmitter has to blanket that whole area with enough energy so each device can get what it needs. That would appear to be grotesquely inefficient.
- **Perpetual motion**, if the above isn't true. If they've somehow solved that problem so that the device is even 10% efficient for three devices—that is, so three receivers each needing two watts requires only 60 watts transmission (still a substantial waste of energy)—then why not populate the three-foot diameter with, say, sixty devices each receiving two watts? At which point you'd be getting 120 watts received power from your 60-watt transmitter: *Free energy!*

As I remember it, broadcast power diminishes as the square of the distance from the transmitter. So if you can charge a two-watt device three feet away from the unit, you should be able to charge an 18-watt device one foot away from the transmitter...leading to even more *free energy!*

Supposedly Philips is partnering with Powercast. Philips is certainly a reputable firm. Govi Rao, the Philips VP quoted in the article, says this:

If you had asked me seven months ago if this was possible, I would have said, "Are you dreaming? Have you been smoking something?" But to see it work is just amazing. It could revolutionize what we know about power.

Maybe I'm missing something about the physics of RF radiation, which is certainly possible. Still, I always get nervous when "revolutionize" and basic physical principals appear in the same discussion.

NonScents

Did I mention that April 2007 was my last issue of *Business 2.0*? Did I mention how happy that makes me, once I figured out that *Business 2.0* was all about making money by any means possible, with scant attention to anything other than the almighty buck? (I guess *Business 1.0* was about finding a need and filling it. *Business 2.0* appears to be All Money, All the Time, and screw everything else.) In any case, another "What's next" feature in the April 2007 issue—the "top 10 products, ideas and trends" that we should all be welcoming—is "how to sell with smell."

"Scent marketing" gives companies "a competitive advantage over ads on the internet"—since scent PC peripherals have notoriously been huge busts in the marketplace. The lesson here isn't that people really don't want random scents blasted at them: It's that *advertisers know better*. *USA Today* and the *Wall Street Journal* will add rub-and-sniff ads, presumably like the Macy's perfume ads that cause me to remove Macy's inserts from the house before my wife's asthma kicks in. Wal-Mart hopes to sell DVDs with "electronic kits that release smells at key moments during a movie," and it's certainly the right retailer to stink up the viewing experience. The "Scent Marketing Institute" estimates that \$500 million will be spent on scent marketing by 2016, about \$80 million this year.

Toward the end of this generally enthusiastic article, it does mention one trifling little drawback: Consumers (never people or citizens: your role and mine is to *consume*) might object. **A lot.** Last December, some idiot ad company put chocolate chip cookie-fragranced strips in San Francisco bus shelters for the "Got Milk?" campaign. A few days later, transit authorities ripped out the strips after commuters complained of "allergic reactions" (and presumably asthma attacks). "Lesson learned, says the industry: Enclosed areas should be avoided." Like homes where scent-stripped magazines and newspapers are read?

PodZinger

This one's both interesting and peculiar, although it's more of a technology than a product. As discussed in the May 2007 *Fast Company*, PodZinger is a "video-search startup" (the writeup says the firm has "largely

cracked" the problem of actually searching video, and the veracity of that claim is irrelevant to this discussion). It "spiders the Web looking for videos and dissects RSS feeds for updates." Then it uses voice recognition to create a "rough transcript of the audio"—rough as in "only 70% accurate." Then you can search for words in video and might get some results. For advertisers, that could mean a new kind of context-sensitive ad.

But that's not the key here; so far, it's an interesting if unproved product. Here's the kicker:

PodZinger's spiders will in time be able to track down specific video content on command—a clip from last night's *Daily Show*, for example, or everything that belongs to Comedy Central—and insert an ad into each segment, no matter where it is playing. In other words, PodZinger could force each and every YouTuber to watch a short commercial if they want to see the clip they asked for, then tally the number of times it's played so the advertiser could pay the copyright holder directly. And what if the person posting the material doesn't want the ad? Tough luck; it's not his video.

On one hand, this sounds pretty good: Office workers still get to watch clips instead of actually working (the numbers on *where* video clips are watched seem pretty clear), you'd get ads on Comedy Central anyway, and Everybody's Happy.

If, of course, those clips "identified" by the magic software are indeed infringements.

As soon as there's one video that uses Comedy Central material for parody, commentary, or another fair use, and PodZinger forces a commercial into this material, you've got a different story: Someone (I'd guess EFF) can and will sue, and probably win.

That can't happen? Effectively it already has. YouTube took down lots of clips because "content owners" sent takedown notices—and restored some of them that were legitimate fair-use cases. It's quite likely that other such illegitimate takedowns have happened where the person doing the new creation with elements of the old either wasn't aware or didn't have the muscle to fight Big Media.

Even if you're a copyright hardliner, you should be cautious about saying that "new" creations should never include elements of previous creations. That wipes out a pretty wide swatch of humanity's cultural record—notably including many important Disney features and most music and literature.

Incidentally, I'm getting lots of press releases touting a different company claiming to have a surefire way to "drain" peer-to-peer networks that contain in-

fringing products, presumably including a way to identify infringing products. The same issues arise, and I'd expect a fast and effective lawsuit the first time "draining" happened for a parody or commentary. There's a fascinating little video commentary on fair use derived entirely from tiny clips of Disney flicks; I think it would make an interesting test case.

More iPod Bling

I've been ignoring the bulk of iPod add-ons. iPod owners who care about fidelity already know the obvious: You need a *good* set of earphones or earbuds to replace the junk Apple supplies—and good earphones don't have to be all that expensive. Owners of any portable music device who care about fidelity also know about data rates—that is, 128K MP3 and 128K AAC both compromise fidelity pretty severely. (I don't buy from iTunes, but 320K non-DRM tracks should be close enough to CD quality for all but the finest ears; nearly all the CDs I listen to are actually CD-Rs converted back to CD audio from MP3 files ripped at 320K from CDs that I own.)

Once in a while, though, something's irresistible, either because it makes so much sense or because it's a little odd. I would say that complaining that a \$150,000 stereo system because it doesn't have an iPod dock is on the "odd" side (see MY BACK PAGES). So, in my opinion, is this one—but maybe not. The March 20, 2007 *PC Magazine* gives 4.5 dots and an Editors' Choice to the Chestnut Hill Sound George, a stereo clock radio with an iPod dock.

It's clever, to be sure. The front panel (with an LCD display and lots of controls) snaps out to become a remote control. The clock radio is that—it has AM/FM and a clock function. And the reviewer says, "It's simply the best-sounding iPod dock I've heard." On the other hand, as with most clock radios, you'll only get good sound if your ears are at the same level as the radio, it's easy to hit the mute button when you're detaching or replacing the remote, chances are stereo effect is pretty minimal and the name is at best silly. One other little drawback: \$549.99 plus shipping and handling. For a clock radio. iPod, of course, not included.

But wait! There's more! The May 2007 *Sound & Vision* reviews a device that puts your iPod in classic company: Rock-Ola's iPod Bubbler. It's just what the first and last words might suggest: A classic jukebox with eight lighted bubble tubes and four rotating color cylinders; as with most modern replica juke-

boxes, it holds 100 CDs (still giving you that great record-changing action). But it also has an iPod dock and remote. I won't argue with the price for a device like this (which has five speakers): \$6,000.

Wicked Lasers

As the squib in the April 10, 2007 *PC Magazine* says, "How can any of this be legal?" This is a website that sells "real lasers"—the kind that can burn holes in trash bags, cut electrical tape and cauterize small cuts. Prices start at \$99. Oh, they also sell protective goggles. Of course, you can buy a throwable knife in any super-market, so legality maybe shouldn't be an issue here.

Editors' Choices and Best Buys

PC World's April 2007 quickie roundup of laptops gives Best Buy honors to the \$2,400 HP Pavillion dv9000t among desktop replacements. It has a huge 17" wide screen and a multiformat DVD burner that can read (but not write) HD DVD, weighs 8 pounds and has a 2GHz dual-core Intel CPU. For an all-purpose laptop at less lofty prices, the \$1,139 Dell Inspiron E1505 gets the nod: also a 2GHz dual-core CPU (the same one) and a multiformat DVD burner (no high-def), but a 15.4" screen. The Dell's significantly lighter (6.9 pounds) and the battery lasts more than twice as long (5.3 hours compared to 2.4).

A March 20, 2007 *PC Magazine* test of five "business laptops"—powerful enough to serve as your work computer, light enough to take with you—gives Editors' Choice to the \$2,299 Lenovo ThinkPad X60 Tablet. As you'd expect for a tablet PC (a convertible, as are most tablets on the market these days), it's got a smallish screen (12") and is fairly light (4.4lb.); it comes with a dual-core CPU and 100GB hard disk—but at desktop 7,200RPM speed, not the typical notebook 5,400 or 4,200RPM. It also has excellent battery life—seven hours as tested. As tested, it runs Windows XP Tablet Edition; Business and Enterprise versions of Vista include tablet support.

For ultraportables—mostly four pounds and under—*PC Magazine's* April 24, 2007 mini-roundup gives Editors' Choice to the pricey Lenovo ThinkPad X60—but this one's \$2,699 and *not* a tablet computer. It does come loaded with 2GB RAM and a 7,200RPM 100GB disk (and, of course, an Intel Core 2 Duo CPU)—and Lenovo's great keyboard (the IBM ThinkPad keyboard). The optical drive is external but the weight's only 3.7lb.—which, for that matter, is heavier than some competitors.

What's the best all-around internet security solution? There may not be one answer. For people who want good security without too much hassle, *PC Magazine's* current answer is Norton 360 (\$80 for up to three PCs, which may be an annual price). "The security protection is effectively the same as that of Norton Internet Security 2007, but with less user interaction required." It includes backup (with online backup as an option) and "tune up" along with the usual security features. The review, aimed at people who think they're techies (*PC's* readership), says "Buy NIS 2007 for yourself, but get Norton 360 for Granny."

PC's broader "security super guide" (April 10, 2007) gives Editors' Choice honors to Safe Eyes 2006 for parental control and Norton Internet Security 2007 as a suite (with ZoneAlarm Internet Security tied for highest overall dot rating).

Here's a standalone Editors' Choice worth noting (April 10, 2007 *PC Magazine*): the Western Digital My Book Pro Edition. It's an external hard drive with a snazzy metallic case, LED capacity gauge on the front, solid backup software and three common high-speed interfaces (USB2, FireWire 400, FireWire 800). You pay \$330; you get 500 gigabytes. Another external hard drive gets an Editors' Choice in the May 8, 2007 issue—but it's a lot pricier and aimed at a different market. The \$1,234 CMS Velocity² RAID Backup System has two 500GB Western Digital drives, both user-replaceable (you can buy extras for \$299 each). While you *could* turn it into a 1GB drive, the more sensible use is RAID 1—giving you 500GB of data stored redundantly. The price noted is with an eSATA card providing much faster transfer than USB2; without the card it's \$1,119. And if you need a "Mac-friendly" external drive, there's the \$340 Iomega UltraMax—two 320GB hard drives configured as a RAID 0 640-GB unit. It's preformatted for Macs.

Library Access to Scholarship

First a few more bits of "opposition literature," albeit less extreme than some discussed in *C&I* 7:4, April 2007. Marc H. Brodsky, executive director of the American Institute of Physics, offers "Fair and useful copyright: A primer" in the *Professional Scholarly Publishing Bulletin* for Fall 2006. Brodsky reminisces about filling out copyright-transfer forms as an author: "I

probably thought it was for my benefit more than anyone else's. While that turns out to be true, it is also an oversimplification..." I'll agree "give us your copyright: it's for your own good" is an oversimplification!

He offers to fill in "a few basic concepts all authors should understand because the future of their societies may depend on their decisions." That's not quite the same as protecting the author *or* improving scholarship as such: Now the *society* is the focus. Brodsky goes through some law and history, then returns to the society focus. Transfer of copyright from author to publisher is "a very positive ingredient for a scientific journal. It gives the *society* important freedoms of action available no other way." [Emphasis added.] If authors retain copyright and license some nonexclusive rights to the publisher, that "would undermine the subscription value" of a journal—by making the scholarship more widely available, although that's not the emphasis Brodsky wants to provide.

Brodsky asserts four "forces" driving OA—none of which seem to have anything to do with broader access to improve scholarship. No, in Brodsky's world, OA is driven by ideologues "who feel 'information should be free'"; by funding agencies who want to mandate "free access...without paying for the reviewing and editing costs incurred by publishers"; by libraries "whose budgets cannot keep up with the growth of research and the materials that they and their patrons want"; and by "technologies, which lower some of the barriers to entry for publishing and make it easier to post copies of almost everything."

Brodsky clarifies that last point: he asserts that electronic publishing is *more* expensive than print publishing—print-specific costs total less than 15% of total production costs and "extra production costs for electronic-specific production, such as tagging and linking, more than eat up that 15%." I find that hard to believe, although publishing-related costs can be as malleable as movie studio "costs."

Did you notice the little trick in one of the other OA "forces" (none of which seem to have anything to do with improved access!): Library budgets can't keep up with "research growth," not "subscription price increases." It gets worse: Brodsky imputes motives to OA advocates. "There are many who would like to see publishers of costly journals fail, and attacking copyright has become one element of a strategy towards that end." Naturally, Brodsky tells authors that OA would *not* result in "wider promotion, dissemination and acceptance of their results" because, after all, it's

publisher branding, marketing and distribution that really count.

The piece ends with an AIP “Position on Open Access & Public Access.” It’s a remarkably “fearful” statement. Two (of four argumentative) bullets in full:

- “AIP is fearful of and against government mandates that provides [sic] rules in favor of one business model over another.
- “AIP is against funding agencies mandating free access to articles after they have undergone costly peer review or editing by publishers.”

The first two sentences of the last bullet: “AIP is also fearful about what government agencies might do with articles they receive under any deposit system. AIP is fearful of mission creep with government agencies using the deposited material beyond the goal of open access...” That’s three “fearful”s in a half-page statement!

The Spring 2007 issue of the same bulletin includes an editorial by Brian D. Crawford (whose comments also appear in *C&I* 7:4). I’ll refer you to *Open access news* for March 26, 2007 for the full statement and Peter Suber’s extensive commentary. Crawford tosses around the term “myth-slingers,” seems to attack *Nature*’s coverage of PSP’s PR decisions (without citing inaccuracies) and reduces arguments that government-funded research should be openly available to this: “The truth is that all this debate boils down to is some people wanting something for nothing—or claiming not to need to pay the tailor for making the suit, because they provided the starting fabric.” As expertly dissected by Suber, it appears Crawford is trying to take the advice of the PR man: “If the other side is on the defensive, it doesn’t matter if they can discredit your arguments.” Crawford says, “The hypocrisy is breathtaking.” I agree, but would suggest he’s looking in the mirror when he says that.

In May 2007, AAP/PSP, IASTM and ALPSP jointly released a position paper, “Author and Publisher Rights for Academic Use: An Appropriate Balance.” It’s an odd position paper, particularly if you believe “balance” means something other than 100% fidelity to one extreme. Of course there’s the claim that publishers need to hold copyright so they can “enforce copyright claims with respect to plagiarism and related ethical issues” (I’d love to see an accounting of such enforcement). We are told publishers “are in the business of making content available to the widest possible audience, provided they can do so in financially-viable fashion,” certainly not pricing as high as the

market will bear in the interest of highest possible profit; exclusive rights are “critical to administering the scientific record.” Much is made of potential “waste” from deposit systems.

Key to this whole statement is that it focuses on researchers’ *own* reuse of their material, not broad access to that research. Here’s the balance statement:

* Academic research authors and their institutions should be able to use and post the content that such authors and institutions themselves provide...for internal institutional non-commercial research and education purposes; and

* Publishers should be able to determine when and how the official publication record occurs, and to derive the revenue benefit from the publication and open posting of the official record (the final published article), and its further distribution and access in recognition of the value of the services they provide.

There’s the balance. Authors and their institutions can use *their submissions* internally; publishers control everything else. It’s about as unbalanced a statement of “balance” as I’ve seen (and, of course, Peter Suber points out some of the problems on May 9, 2007).

Since this discussion of opposition follows from the earlier discussion of extremes, it’s worth noting a followup on “the other side.” I was unhappy with Dorothea Salo’s failure to denounce a tasteless analogy used by a major OA proponent, and said so. Salo responded with “Caught, and an apology, and thanks” at *Caveat lector* on March 23, 2007. She offers reasons why she was wrong—failing to read more deeply about the incident beyond Tom Scott’s reporting, as a result failing to spot how deeply wrong the analogy was—and, by failing to nail Richard Smith for descending to such tactics, hurting the “smart, articulate arguments for my side of the OA debate.” She also explains how it could happen, and I hear just what she’s saying. I want to thank Dorothea Salo for the public apology, for the clear explanation, for her consistently thoughtful and honest approach to OA—and, to be sure, for indirectly helping convince me to write ON BEING WRONG in *C&I* 7:6 (June 2007), a brief essay I’m particularly proud of.

Money

For one purist approach to open access, it’s not about money at all—it’s only about fully open access to article-length scholarly literature. The most purist version says it’s not really OA unless people are free to do datamining on the text and republish text for profit (with attribution). So, for example, if *Cites & Insights*

was scholarly (OK, stop laughing), it wouldn't qualify as OA even though there's no charge to the end user and redistribution is explicitly allowed under the Creative Commons license—because the CC license is BY-NC and “noncommercial” is too restrictive for one OA definition. And one camp of OA says library budgets aren't an issue at all; we can have full OA while letting the big sci-tech publishers drain every dollar they can from library coffers.

That's not my approach to OA. These pieces are called *LIBRARY ACCESS TO SCHOLARSHIP*, not Open Access; I'm primarily interested in OA as a way to improve library abilities to provide access—not only to article-length scholarship but also to monographs and literature outside the “scholarly” circle. So I'm very interested in the money and a little impatient with the camp that says “oh, we don't want to disturb current journal pricing; we just want full access.”

The problem with money and open access is that it's so complex—and, in the case of actual publishing and distribution costs, so opaque. We regularly hear numbers cited for the *cost* of handling a scholarly article—but those numbers are pretty clearly based on dividing total *revenue* by number of articles, which is at best a misleading way to state costs. Total revenue for a journal includes profit (or the nonprofit equivalent), corporate or societal overhead and potentially a whole bunch of other things that have nothing to do with the actual costs of refereeing, editing, markup and dissemination (whether print or electronic).

Bill Hooker posted “Open question on open access” at *Open reading frame* on November 15, 2006 (www.sennoma.net/). He quotes “Mark D” on this issue:

The problem is, I haven't seen any hard data that documents the cost of peer review, redaction, and publishing. Everyone throws numbers around as if they were confetti. We are all, supposedly (publishers and librarians) in the scientific/technical community, yet so very few people take a scientific approach to this issue.

The first step on the road to open access should be a review of the processes and costs associated with scientific publication. Sounds like a good paper for the library association journal. Any librarians out there that want to tackle this paper?

And as for the publishers, if they really do wish a dialogue, then why don't they reveal their redaction costs? Any takers out there in the publishing world?

Hooker follows that quote with this—which disagrees with Marc Brodsky's claim near the top of this article:

Online publication dramatically lowers costs relative to printed journals, but it is not free. Copyediting is still

required, peer review must be coordinated even though the actual reviewing is done by authors for no charge, and the digital objects (articles, data, etc) must be created, archived and maintained in an accessible format. There are surely other important costs, too, that do not occur to me right now. All of this costs money, but the Big Question of OA is: how much money?

Hooker cites a bunch of figures—but some of those figures, from commercial publishers, almost certainly represent desired revenue, not actual costs. As it stands, the question remains open: Just what does it cost to run an OA scholarly journal? There is no single answer, to be sure. The range offered is so wide as to be more infuriating than helpful—from PLoS' \$2,000 to \$2,500 charges (why would second-tier PLoS journals be cheaper to process manuscripts for than first-tier ones?) to BioMed Central's \$1,000 to \$1,800—and down to Hindawi's \$500 or so (Hindawi charges \$60 to \$120 per page). Hindawi claims to be profitable; PLoS is supposed to be nonprofit. In any case, informed comment requires more than raw numbers. For example, more than half of OA journals don't charge “author-side” fees at all: What do *their* budgets look like? Informed comment requires analysis of where the money goes and whether the costs make sense. To do such analysis requires open access of a different sort—to the balance sheets in some depth.

Hooker concludes:

It would be very informative to see inside the finances of a variety of OA publishers. Knowing what publishers charge, as above, does not tell us what it actually costs to run the journals. Beyond saying “we are showing profit,” Hindawi does not seem to be forthcoming on that issue. I take it as read that for-profit ventures charge what the market will bear, but when the market in question is largely scientists and their allies (librarians, clinicians, &c.), it seems logical that the market should look for data on which to base decisions about just what it will bear. Commercial entities rarely have open-access balance sheets, but perhaps OA publishers could take the lead there as well?

Peter Suber comments in a November 17, 2006 *Open access news* post, noting that estimates of some publishers “test our credulity” (e.g., £30,000 or nearly \$60,000 *per article* for *Science*) but also that different estimates count different aspects of the publishing process—and different publishers have different levels of overhead and efficiency. Suber also notes that OA publishing has (or may have) fewer expenses than non-OA publishing (e.g., no subscription management or marketing). He cites a 2002 study giving \$400 as an average cost of peer review per published article; this is mostly the cost

of facilitation and should be coming down as clerical tasks are automated.

Paying for green OA

A reminder: “green OA” is OA archiving—as opposed to “gold OA,” actual OA journal publishing. In the lead article in *SPARC open access newsletter* 108 (April 2, 2007), “Paying for green open access,” Peter Suber notes that “some publishers want to charge for OA archiving and at least one foundation is willing to pay for it.” He notes that this could slow green OA, “either by the direct imposition of new and needless costs or by confusing policy-makers about the economics of green OA.”

First the American Chemical Society (ACS) re-announced its hybrid journal program, AuthorChoice, and reminded us that authors who wish to self-archive must pay the AuthorChoice fee. Then Elsevier and the Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) agreed that when an HHMI-funded author publishes in an Elsevier journal, HHMI will pay Elsevier a fee to deposit the peer-reviewed postprint in PubMed Central six months after publication.

ACS lets authors deposit articles in independent repositories—but does *not* let them retain copyright, will not promise to reduce subscription prices in proportion to AuthorChoice uptake—and, the killer here, will charge the AuthorChoice fee “even to authors who want to self-archive.” Notably, ACS was never a “green publisher”—and about a week before the ACS announcement, Wiley announced a hybrid (that is, “author-pays” OA options within toll journals) program with the *same* effect. Wiley charges \$3,000 for OA archiving, depositing the published version upon publication. ACS charges the same (seemingly high) fee but with discounts for ACS members and subscribing institutions.

At both publishers, these fees pay for gold OA, and I should make clear that I have no objection to charging for gold OA. On the contrary; if we are to have it, we must pay for it (through author-side publication fees, institutional subsidies, or some other way). However, I do object to charging for gold OA when authors only want green OA. It's like offering a car with a free bicycle to people who only want to buy a bicycle.

Green OA need not be the published version; it can be a preprint or the peer-reviewed but not copy-edited version. When ACS official Adam Chesler was asked explicitly whether the same fee would apply for self-archiving of the peer-reviewed manuscript (rather than the published version), he said yes. “Chesler's answer makes the ACS policy even worse than it

seemed at first. It's bad enough to force authors to pay for gold OA in order to get green OA; at least they really get gold OA too, wanted or not. But under this new wrinkle in the policy, even self-archiving authors who don't get gold OA must pay for it.”

What about Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) and Elsevier? Part of Suber's commentary:

The Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) is similar in many ways to the Wellcome Trust (WT), although it has kept a lower profile in the OA debates. The WT is the largest private funder of medical research in the UK, and the HHMI is, or was, the largest private funder of medical research in the US. (I haven't seen recent figures but HHMI might have been overtaken by the Gates Foundation.) HHMI agreed long ago to pay publication fees at fee-based OA journals, and may have been the first funder anywhere to do so. With PLoS, it convened the 2003 meeting that produced the Bethesda Statement on Open Access Publishing. Now it's about to adopt an OA archiving mandate for HHMI-funded research.

The WT OA mandate requires deposit in PubMed Central (or its UK equivalent, UK PMC) and the forthcoming HHMI mandate will do the same. However, Elsevier allows OA archiving only through the author's personal web site or institutional repository. That's why HHMI and Elsevier first sat down to talk.

If neither side revised its policies, then HHMI-funded authors would have to shun Elsevier journals and Elsevier journals would have to shun HHMI-funded authors. Both organizations would gain from a compromise. But unfortunately that fact alone didn't determine which side had to budge. In this case, it was HHMI and it caved. It's a shame because it had considerably more bargaining power than Elsevier...

HHMI will pay Elsevier \$1,000 for each article published in a Cell Press journal and \$1,500 for each article in any other Elsevier journal.

Suber discusses possible consequences if HHMI had *not* caved in. He also notes that Wellcome Trust signed a similar deal—but Wellcome Trust pays more (\$3,000 and \$5,000) and gets more—immediate OA to the published version instead of embargoed OA to an unedited version. For that matter, Cell Press seems to be expanding its embargo period as part of the deal. Here's how Suber sees the HHMI-Elsevier deal: “I have to conclude that HHMI was ripped off. Or if that's too negative, Elsevier got a fantastic deal.”

Part of Suber's conclusion:

I'm not saying that the distinction between green and gold OA is immutable. Of course the two types can be blended. One blend—the best for researchers—would charge no fee to the depositor and provide immediate access to the published edition. Another blend—the worst for researchers—would charge a fee, impose an

embargo, and limit access to the final version of the author's peer-reviewed manuscript.

The problem with the HHMI-Elsevier deal is not that it blurs the distinction between green and gold but that it needlessly adopts the worst blend for researchers. The problem with the ACS deal is that it artificially clamps green and gold together and forces anyone wanting green to pay for gold to get it.

Learned Publishing, April 2007

This issue includes a guest editorial and article related to costs, both of which can be read free from the website (in PDF form; look for “Learned Publishing” and go from there). The guest editorial, by Rick Anderson, is entitled “Open access—clear benefits, hidden costs.” It’s a tricky editorial, coming from a librarian but effectively undermining what one might assume to be library interests. It’s also a very *strange* editorial, as Peter Suber notes: How often is a guest editorial accompanied by a press release and a call for “supporting signatures”? Indeed, the editorial ends with a box stating the following:

ALPSP strongly supports the sentiments in the above Editorial; in particular we agree that, while open access to the scientific research literature may offer benefits to society, the true costs of a change of business model must be investigated.

We would like to encourage other organizations and individuals to show their support for this statement by adding their names to the list of signatories... The Washington DC Principles for Free Access to Science Coalition...is one of the first signatories.

The DC Principles Coalition is, I’m afraid, notorious for its misleading statements and adamant opposition to anything that might actually *improve* access to science (see *C&I* 5:1 and several more recent essays); ALPSP is also hardly known as an objective observer in this area.

Some of what Anderson has to say:

There is no question that OA offers potentially significant benefits to society. All other things being equal, free public access to scientific information is clearly a good thing. But all other things are never equal, and to know whether and to what degree any particular OA solution is really a good thing requires a calculation not simply of its benefits, but of its net benefits once costs are taken into account...

In the case of an OA journal, costs are most commonly borne by authors....

In fact, mandates that result in widespread and effective OA will inevitably drive at least some publishers out of business, whether or not such an effect is intended by those who promote OA.

...A solution that provides universal access without supporting publishers may be perfectly acceptable. [This stance assumes] that publishers add no value to the scholarly information chain, and can therefore be harmed with impunity and without concern for negative consequences to the scholarly community in general...

In fact, most STM publishers are not profit-seeking corporations from outside the scholarly community, but rather learned societies and other non-profit entities, many of which rely on income from journal subscriptions to support their conferences, member services, and scholarly endeavours—as well as the peer-review and publishing activities that will remain important in a self-archiving environment. In other words, a publishing system that undermines the ability of publishers to make money in the marketplace thereby may also undermine scholars and scientists in their ability to do their work....

In summary: OA offers real benefits to society. However, the net value of those benefits cannot be determined unless its costs are computed as well. The purpose of this statement is not to call on participants in the scholarly information chain to fight against OA, but only to move forward while taking full account of costs as well as benefits, and to work towards solutions that offer a net benefit to society....

There’s more (including raising the specter that diverting 0.5% of NIH’s budget to support author-side charges means a significant reduction in medical research). Readers of previous LAS sections or the better OA literature will have spotted problems right off the bat. Peter Suber took apart this editorial far better than I can. Some of his comments:

No serious OA proponent has ever said that it makes costs disappear. OA does shift costs, and some shifts are better than others. But OA does more than shift costs; it also *reduces* them...

*In the case of an OA journal, costs are most commonly borne by authors....*This is untrue and I'm surprised to see it asserted in an ALPSP journal with the unusually strong ALPSP endorsement represented by the call for signatures. For it was an ALPSP-sponsored study that showed that only a minority of OA journals charge author-side publication fees.

I’ll add here that there is *absolutely no reason* to believe that most author-side charges would actually be paid by authors...and I think Rick Anderson knows that.

The argument that OA archiving might not harm publishers has...been based on the evidence from physics, the field with the highest levels and longest history of OA archiving. Not only have the American Physical Society (APS) and the Institute of Physics Publishing Ltd (IOPP) seen no cancellations to date arising from OA archiving, they both host mirrors of arXiv, the premier OA archive for the field. (Now for my standard demurrer: while

there's no evidence yet that high-volume OA archiving will kill subscriptions, it might really have this effect in some fields and, if it did, it would still be justified.)

...Speaking for myself, I've never denied that journals add value. To me the question is not whether a journal adds value but how to pay for the most essential kinds of added value without creating access barriers for readers.

Suber agrees that a “move forward” ought to take into account the full costs—and he and other OA advocates have been willing to make that case. “However, I doubt this will make the debate any easier to resolve than it has been up to now.”

Suber doesn't take Anderson to task for the segment beginning “In fact, most.” I will and have already: While society publishers are neither the primary “villains” in the current publishing scheme nor the primary targets for OA, it is nonetheless unreasonable to claim that libraries should be propping up conferences, member services and other non-publishing aspects of societies (other than library societies). If subsidies are needed, they should come from the departments related to the society, *not* hidden in subscription prices. And, of course, tossing in peer review in this case is an indirect hint that OA might reduce or eliminate peer review, although Anderson doesn't include this common canard as a direct statement.

What of the article—“The cost of journal publishing: a literature review and commentary” by Donald W. King? It's long (22 pages), detailed and inconclusive. King distinguishes between price and cost; unfortunately, he also tends to use scare quotes around some OA claims (such as that subscription prices pose a “barrier” to access, a claim that seems self-evident enough to remove those quote marks). King knows his numbers and his research methodology (in this case primarily a literature review), and I recommend the article for those wishing to study these issues further—but I don't have a lot to say about it here. I think it's clear that you can't use a single cost (e.g., the price of a “journal publication system”) as the basis for asserting proper OA costs per article. I think it's also clear that some publishers will legitimately be far more efficient than others, and that at some point some levels of inefficiency may be insupportable.

Conclusion and Apology (of Sorts)

That's less than half the source material in my LAS folder. There's some fascinating stuff on institutional repositories and how they are (or aren't) used. Peter

Suber has done some long pieces on last year's progress and this year's probabilities that richly deserve excerpts and comments. FRPAA seems likely to be resurrected—and that leads to preemptive stuff like a *Wired News* article that appears balanced but seems to provide much more space to quotes from opponents than proponents.

Maybe I'll get back to some of those other access elements in a later issue. Maybe they'll become so aged that I'll let them go. In either case, now is not the time. For those of you who want to follow OA in more depth, you already know the mantra. Read Peter Suber's blog and newsletter. Read *DigitalKoans*. Read *Caveat lector* for real-world comments on repositories and the potential for library publishing. Read other OA blogs and resources.

This section is incomplete. It always will be. I'm just being more explicit than usual.

My Back Pages

Mysterious Cell Phone Charges

This isn't humorous but it is bizarre. An April 2007 *PC World* story discusses people getting billed for cell phone services they can't identify—and finding that the carrier won't help. The example: A real estate agent finds a monthly \$34 charge she doesn't recognize. Sprint says “third-party; not our problem.” They won't identify the third party. Agent asks Sprint to stop the billing. “Sorry, you have to contact the third party we won't identify.” She turns off the voice and data service—and the bill keeps coming. *Eventually*, seven months after the agent first inquires, Sprint says it comes from Blinko, an outfit offering ring tones, games, SMS jokes and other hot stuff. For \$34 a month?

Agent calls Blinko. They won't refund the money, saying “well, you're paying the bills but you're not the person who signed up for the service.” After she says the phone's been deactivated for seven months, Blinko gives back two months' worth of charges. *Eventually*, Sprint covers most of the rest. “Sprint can't explain how this happened...”

It's not just Sprint. Verizon user sees a \$10 charge and finds “weekly trivia questions sent via text messages.” Verizon first says it doesn't know who's responsible for the charges (but it's happy to pass along the bill), then identifies...Blinko.

The story says *PC World* has heard many similar stories—and the Better Business Bureau counts “thousands of complaints” about Blinko, which is facing a class action lawsuit (over unwanted text messages and monthly charges) in Michigan.

Then there’s text message spam. Millions of messages to Illinois subscribers in one case, from one known company. That’s already illegal, apparently; at least one court has ruled that the law making unsolicited cell-phone calls illegal covers text messages as well (as it should!).

Serious Audio Dollars (Again)

The Absolute Sound (February 2007) reported on the Rocky Mountain Audio Fest and included the “best of show” and runner-up for best audio setups. All things considered, I suppose they weren’t that bad. The best room had a mere \$183,000 worth of equipment (that’s two-channel audio—actually, just CD sound). Second best? \$210,000 worth of gear. After all, what’s a couple hundred thousand between friends?

A couple months later, the mag reported on high end audio at the 2007 Consumer Electronics Show. The comment that impressed me most was about a turntable/arm combination that costs a little over \$100,000. One hundred thousand dollars, that is. This is a combo that Michael Fremer of *Stereophile* purchased (at an undisclosed “accommodation price”) and loudly proclaims as eminently worth every penny. The *Absolute Sound* writer listened to this ultimate turntable in two different sound systems in two different rooms. In one room—where the exhibitors *didn’t know what chamber music was*, touting AC/DC instead—the turntable came off as, apparently, mediocre. In the other, it was “better...it still wasn’t close to world-class.” (This person’s hot new tip for the best equipment at the show: MAGICO Model 6 speakers, a mere \$125,000 for a pair. Each one is in a 650lb. aluminum enclosure.)

Ah, but the April 2007 *Stereophile* CES report has that beat. Goldmund is planning to produce a new turntable in limited quantities: Five each year for five years, 25 total. Price? \$300,000. You pay half up front. How will it perform? Who cares? You’re buying scarcity, not quality. Naturally, Michael Fremer “can’t wait” to see one of these.

The May 2007 *Stereophile* includes five reviews that, taken together, show an interesting range of indications as to how much worthwhile audio equipment should cost. Here’s the Nagra CDP CD player—

not DVD or DVD-Audio or SACD, just plain old CD. As with most high-end CD players, it’s somebody else’s transport (a Philips CD-Pro2M) with fancy suspension and other add-ons and Nagra’s own case and electronics. The price? A mere \$13,495.

On the other hand—this one’s a surprise for the right reasons—Rega’s new P1 record player (that is, a turntable with an arm and cartridge included) reviews as “very strongly recommended”—and costs \$350, a whole lot less than most reviewers would consider entry-level for either an arm or a cartridge alone. By the way, it’s not made in China: It’s “all-English-made.” While the Oppo Digital DV-970HD won’t play LPs, it does play CDs—and DVDs, DVD-Audio, SACD, all writable DVD and CD options except DVD-RAM, pretty much everything except HD DVD and Blu-ray. The test results are good, if not quite as good as the most expensive equipment. Did I mention that this play-everything unit costs \$149? And that the reviewer found it perfectly at home in a \$50,000 sound system?

Dominance Is Forever

PC Magazine is celebrating its 25th anniversary with a series of looks back. Remember the first IBM PC? It was actually fairly cheap—\$1,565 (1982 dollars, equal to \$3,347 in 2006). That got you a 5MHz 8088 processor, 40K ROM (remember when the amount of ROM was advertised?), somewhere between 16K and 256K RAM, one or two “disks” (diskette drives), and an 11.5" monochrome display. I’m guessing 16K RAM for that price—back in those days, 256K RAM would cost a lot.

That’s not the reason for this item. Nor is their note about a letter in the second issue forecasting that they’d be out of business within five years if they didn’t abandon print publishing and go electronic (after all, all the *hip* people knew we’d all be reading everything from the screen by 1987). It’s not even the fascinating mini-bio on Dave Bradley, the guy who came up with Ctrl-Alt-Del. Nope, it’s a reminder of the program that dominated word processing in 1982. WordStar from MicroPro. Remember WordStar? (Remember when Lotus 1-2-3 was always going to be the only serious spreadsheet?)

Does Windows Damage Memory?

Lance Ulanoff’s column in the February 20, 2007 *PC Magazine* explains why Windows Vista will succeed. Most of it’s probably right (although he overstates Ap-

ple's market share), but there's one huge gap, stated in the first paragraph and repeated in the last.

In the first, he says "Vista will succeed, as have all of Microsoft's previous operating systems." In the last, he talks about this inevitable success. "This tale played itself out with Windows 95, 98, and XP."

OK, except there's something missing from that list of "all of Microsoft's previous operating systems," even if history begins with Windows 95. Remember Windows ME? You call that success?

As for "all," there's Windows 1, Windows 2, Windows 3.0, OS/2 (yes, that started as a Microsoft OS), and I'm pretty sure other Microsoft OS failures.

Into the Future!

The March 20, 2007 *PC Magazine* has a six-page pictorial on "designing the future." Some of the gadgets are at least interesting—a leaning-tower-of-Pisa slide phone, a "concept PC" that unfolds from a size not much larger than a CD case (but you wind up with a full-size keyboard and a tiny 7" screen), a "home PC that doubles as a living-room lamp."

Then there are prototypes that "hint of late-night QVC," even to the editors: a disposable cell phone made out of paper ("It's perfect. If you're a drug dealer."), an espresso maker for your car, a transparent toaster and another toaster that burns pictures into your toast, a chair with TV screens built into the back and seat—and, slightly more appalling than the video-game urinal (think about it—and yes, that's how it works), an internet toilet-roll browser. So you never have down time at all...

The May 8, 2007 *PC Magazine* has a brief interview with Helen Grainer, founder of iRobot (the Roomba company). Here's the paragraph that convinced me Grainer was worth a mention:

iRobot's vision is that of an autonomous home enabled by robots. In ten years, I believe every home with a PC will have not just one but several robots for time-consuming chores. Envision robots taking on the dusting, cleaning bathrooms, cleaning pools, mowing lawns, washing windows as well as reminding you to take your medication, bringing you a drink, and more.

In ten years. *Every home* with a PC. "Not just one but several robots." Right. And you can doubtless control them by either brainwaves or remote control from your flying car or the automatic highway.

Editorial Dissonance

Travel Age West, April 16, 2007, page 8: "Travel Guard offers free assistance to Greek cruise ship evacuees." A

nice story—AIG Travel Guard, one of the big travel-insurance outfits, offered to provide emergency travel services and medical assistance services to Americans evacuated from the Sea Diamond cruise ship when it ran aground off Santorini on April 5.

Travel Age West, April 16, 2007, page 13, on Eastern Mediterranean trips from Gate 1 Travel:

The company's seven-day Best Buy Athenian, With Three-Day Cruise program, begins at \$659 (\$1,299 with air from New York). The price includes roundtrip flights from New York to Athens; two nights in superior first-class accommodations in Athens; three-night Aegean cruise aboard the Sea Diamond; all transfers; and 11 meals (five breakfasts, three lunches and three dinners). All departures are guaranteed.

That's gotta be some guarantee...

Legislation to Cure Annoyances

Yes, citing a John Dvorak *PC Magazine* column is a cheap shot—but the April 24, 2007 back-of-issue "The little things I hate" is just too good to pass up. Dvorak complains about USB connector variations and external power supply variations. Well and good, but here's Dvorak's take: "I honestly believe that Congress should pass a law on PC connectors, keeping the number of designs to an absolute minimum...I'm not kidding." He repeats the call for legislation later in the column—and extends it to power supplies. Legislation. Heck, maybe we should pass legislation outlawing annoying cell phone ringtones.

Masthead

Cites & Insights: Crawford at Large, Volume 7, Number 8, Whole Issue 92, ISSN 1534-0937, a journal of libraries, policy, technology and media, is written and produced by Walt Crawford, a senior analyst at OCLC.



Cites & Insights is sponsored by YBP Library Services, <http://www.ybp.com>.

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