



Biblio-Notes

Issued by the Literatures in English Section of the Association of College & Research Libraries, a division of the American Library Association

#44 Fall 2004

ISSN 1076-8947

Notes from the Chair:

Much Ado About Reading?

I recently moved across the country from Washington state to the D.C. Metro area, some 2600 miles away. Along the way, I saw a number of places and states that I'd only heard of or read about in books before, including South Dakota, Minnesota, and the Pennsylvania Turnpike.

Shortly before moving, I had read the recent 47 page "Reading at Risk" report from the National Endowment for the Arts (<http://www.nea.gov/pub/ReadingAtRisk.pdf>) in preparation for this column. It gave me a lot to think about during my four days of driving.

The report argues that Americans are now reading less literature during the leisure time than they did twenty years ago, and that their rate of literature consumption has steadily declined. By literature, they mean poetry, fiction, or drama. This is bad, the report argues, both because reading literature encourages intellectual development and inquiry and because reading literature is correlated to a number of civic and cultural activities such as volunteering and attending sporting events. The report noted a correlation between the rise of electronic media such as television and the Internet but admitted that correlation does not equal causation.

I have a number of concerns about the report's methodology and conclusions. First, it only includes literature read as leisure and not for work or study. This would disqualify the reading habits of most academics and librarians. Secondly, it only includes "literature," and not nonfiction, although respondents were also asked whether they had read any books at all. Thirdly, it doesn't measure graphic novels, creative nonfiction, online fiction, zines, and other non traditional literary formats and/or genres that have recently emerged.

I wondered, as I drove across the country, what this report meant for literature librarians. Was literature truly in danger? If so, what should we be doing about it? Should we be staging poetry sit-in's? Should we still be buying literature and books about interpreting literature? And how should we define "literature" anyway?

I personally think that literature still matters, even if fewer people are reading it. But I'm also not comfortable with defining "literature." I can't help but think of the nineteenth century, when public librarians were urging their patrons to read "edifying" nonfiction rather than those newfangled (and thus trashy) novels. Those public librarians would be amazed to find an apparent decline in novel reading lamented.

If anything, I would prefer to expand the "literature" category to embrace both past and emerging forms of literature. I'll continue to buy books on heroic couplets, but I'll also buy books about literary ezines.

I'd be very interested to hear what the rest of you think about the NEA's report, and invite you to post your thoughts to the LES list serv. The report is available in PDF format at <http://www.nea.gov/pub/ReadingAtRisk.pdf>

Jen Stevens
LES Chair, 2004-2005
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(This is a best guess at her new work email; also try her at stevens@turbonet.com)

Life as a Literature Librarian

Several years ago when I was appointed librarian liaison to the English department it was both good news and bad news. The good news was that English literature is both my field and my passion. The English department was the assignment I coveted.

The bad news was that, because the librarian liaison program was new at Villanova University, our understanding of our roles and responsibilities was vague. While some guidance was offered, much of what we accomplished was the result of personal intuition and initiative.

Yet, that turned out to be good news as well. We were able to define and construct our responsibilities ourselves and allowed to grow into the job, responding to opportunities as they arose.

Since I'd done my English graduate work at Villanova, I knew many of the faculty in that department well. Many were comfortable discussing their expectations of the library with me, although occasionally their sense of camaraderie and good manners precluded their complaining openly.

I've tried to build on those professional and personal relationships by getting to know their research interests and their individual strengths and weaknesses regarding the library. Are they comfortable searching databases or should I perform the search for them? One professor still prefers not to use e-mail so I correspond with him via campus mail.

One of my goals as librarian liaison is to be seen more often in the corridors of the English department, although I often feel like I'm glued to my desk here in the library. I try to attend faculty lectures and readings, and I make it a point to get in touch with new faculty to introduce myself as a link to the library and to encourage their suggestions. As a colleague mentioned at a recent LES group discussion, it's also important to get to know the departmental secretaries, acknowledging their great influence in the department. All of these strategies are probably obvious but have been helpful for me.

Three discoveries: One, I've become a broker in the debate over print vs. electronic content. As Leon Russell says in his song "Magic Mirror," "The left ones think I'm right. The right ones think I'm wrong." To the people in the English department, I am the defender of

electronic content - its ease of accessibility and updating. To my colleagues in the library I am in defense of print - the necessity of maintaining the print version for some sources and recognizing that many readers feel more comfortable with print.

Secondly, I find satisfaction in "weeding" the circulating collection. This has turned out to be a terrific way to know the collection, to learn about authors and who is being taught now and who's been taught in the past, and to make the collection a better place for our patrons to visit for our patrons.

Finally, I've found that the Literatures in English members have proven invaluable as sources of sage advice and reference help. I would recommend the LES list serve and LES meetings at ALA as wonderful forums for discussion, opinions and problem-solving.

Judith Olsen
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Kinja Librarianship

If you're on the Internet at all these days, chances are you read some blogs. If you're a literature librarian responsible for keeping up with new releases and reviews, literary prizes, and important trade gossip (Anne Rice is bashing her own readers over on Amazon.com¹! Copies of E. Annie Proulx's *Plan and Make Your Own Fences & Gates, Walkways, Walls, and Drives*² are available on ebay!), blogs can be your best friends. The only problem is keeping track of them, since good blogs are all over the Web, and they update all the time.

Enter Kinja (<http://kinja.com>). Kinja is a blog aggregating tool, which means it takes your moveable feast of blogs and hands it all to you on a single plate. Instead of reading blogs at their authors' home sites, you read them on your own personalized Kinja page, updated in real time (more or less.) And Kinja isn't the only blog aggregating tool available; others include Bloglines, Blogarithm, BlogHog,

¹ True! See <http://www.metafilter.com/mefi/35723>.

² Also true! See http://www.moorishgirl.com/archives/2004_09.html#001678.

Rootblog, and Blo.gs. Any of them will let you set up a "blogroll" that provides regular updates on content in your favorite blogs and websites, usually truncated so you can easily skim headlines and only read what you want.

I've set up my Kinja account with a variety of different information feeds, some for professional purposes and some just for interest. Here's a sampling of the sites and blogs I follow, and the ways I find them useful in my work:

Open Access News

(<http://www.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/fosblog.html>) keeps me up to date on what's going on in the scholarly publishing wars. I regularly pull items from this blog to pass along to faculty.

Blog of a Bookslut

(<http://www.bookslut.com/blog/>) provides good literary gossip and reviews, often of books that are a little below the national media's radar.

Confessions of a Science Librarian

(<http://jdupuis.blogspot.com/>) is a good all-purpose academic librarianship blog, and it also gives me a peek over the fence into the sciences.

Moorish Girl (<http://www.moorishgirl.com/>)

gives good reviews and literary news, particularly on Middle Eastern, Arab, and Islamic topics.

The Complete Review (<http://www.complete-review.com/main/main.html>) gives, well, reviews.

Crooked Timber (<http://crookedtimber.org/>)

is an interdisciplinary academic journal that keeps me plugged into what faculty are talking about.

Maud Newton: Blog

(<http://maudnewton.com/blog/>) is a popular, hip literary blog that gives lots of good news, reviews, and general dish.

Chocolate Runner's Blog

(<http://www.completerunning.com/chocolate-runners-blog/>) is a crucial source of timely information concerning the impact of both

chocolate and running on the profession of literature librarianship. No, really. I swear.

To see what a Kinja account looks like, check out mine:

http://kinja.com/user/karen_librarian

You can set up your own account at <http://kinja.com>.

Karen Munro
Literature Librarian
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Membership Forum Topic

How are *YOU* handling Graphic Novels? What "exactly" are graphic novels, and why should (or shouldn't) academic libraries purchase and preserve them? Are they be the "new" art form of the 21st Century? Or, are they an old art form with a new name? Please join us at the Membership Forum on Sunday, January 16 from 1 - 3 to talk about this issue. Prior to Midwinter, the LES Membership Committee will list an article or two on LES-L to help generate discussion. For more information, please contact Madeline Copp at mcopp@jhu.edu or 410-516-8540.

Madeline A. Copp,
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ACRL National Conference

ACRL 12th National Conference, "Currents and Convergence: Navigating the Rivers of Change"

Minneapolis, Minnesota, April 7-10, 2005
Registration Now Open!

The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) invites you to register for the premiere conference dedicated to meeting the interests of academic and research librarians. More than 200 peer-reviewed programs will be

offered to help you keep pace with the latest library research and techniques. Poster sessions and round tables provide additional opportunities to exchange ideas and discuss hot topics.

Register by February 7, 2005, and save more than 20% on your conference registration. Group discounts are also available for institutions that register ten or more employees. For a complete program details, registration and hotel reservations or to customize a conference schedule and sign up for a tour, visit www.acrl.org/minneapolis today!

The ACRL 12th National Conference offers stimulating programs that reflect the dynamics and diversity of our profession.

* Learn how to recruit, educate and retain new librarians

* Explore the impact of information technology on library service

* Clear the chaos in scholarly communication

* Discover how to create, control and preserve digital resources

* Gain creative answers to your higher education funding needs

A distinguished lineup of keynote speakers include:

* Opening Keynote: William J. Mitchell, Professor of Architecture and Media Arts and Sciences, Academic Head of Media Arts and Sciences, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

* Keynote Luncheon: "Women of Mystery", Carolina Garcia-Aguilera, J.A. Jance, and Valerie Wilson Wesley. Moderator: Liane Hansen, National Public Radio

* Closing Keynote Session: Sylvia Hurtado, Ph.D., Professor and Director, Higher Education Research Institute, Graduate School of Education and Information Sciences, UCLA

We look forward to seeing you in Minneapolis at the ACRL 12th National Conference! For more details please visit our Web site at

www.acrl.org/minneapolis or contact 800-545-2433 ext. 2515; or email: acrl@ala.org.

Letter to MLA

At the Midwinter meeting in San Diego, the Reference Discussion Group took up some issues of concern over the newly-revised MLA guidelines for citing electronic sources. The

result was a letter to Joseph Gibaldi, the *MLA Handbook* author. The letter, which was sent in April 2004 under the auspices of the LES Executive Committee, summarized our discussion and offered our collective assistance in streamlining e-source citations. In response, the MLA has set up an Ad-Hoc Committee on MLA Style, and Helene Williams will be serving on this group. The committee will meet in November, with recommendations due in February 2005. Many thanks to LES members and the Executive Committee for their energy, ideas, and willingness to collaborate with the MLA on this issue.

Joseph Gibaldi
Modern Language Association of America
26 Broadway, 3rd floor
New York, NY 10004-1789

April 16, 2004

Dear Dr. Gibaldi,

At the midwinter meeting of the American Library Association in January, the sixth edition of the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* was the subject at a lively meeting of the Literatures in English Section Reference Discussion Group. This group consists of librarians who have reference, instruction, and collections responsibilities in the areas of English and American literature. Barbara Chen was going to discuss with you some specific points from the meeting; the members of the Literatures in English Section would like to supplement that with a summary of key points, and we invite you to respond. This letter is also being sent on the behalf of the Literatures in English Executive Committee.

The focus of the discussion, which began online with about a dozen respondents, then continued with 29 participants at ALA, was on Section 5.9, "Citing Electronic Sources." We all agree that creating citations for electronic sources is problematic, and our overarching concern is that the process is becoming too complicated to be effective. We understand the need for complete documentation, not only to help avoid plagiarism, but also to reflect the student's research process. However, if the ultimate goal of a citation is to allow the reader to retrace the writer's steps and retrieve the document (in any format), some of the elements in the examples have proven to

be more confusing than helpful, as Barbara's examples will show. The use of jargon, inconsistencies in format, and the questionable need for users to know the name of the product's vendor (which can and does vary between libraries) were some of the points of concern.

One of the other issues discussed was that of who is teaching citation style to students, and how. Librarians may touch on citation style during library instruction sessions, but more typically we see the students individually at the reference desk, as they are (often frantically) finishing their research. Many faculty we work with admit that they also do not teach citation style. If the *MLA Handbook* is meant to be a stand-alone guide for students, it appears that many of the students we see are unable to use it without further consultation and instruction. A surprising point that many of us discovered we have in common is that we end up showing students how to cite the online source (for example, a journal article), as if they had looked at the print version, in order to avoid the cumbersome process of creating a citation for the electronic version. This is admittedly a stopgap measure, and as students become less familiar with print sources due to the plethora of online materials, even this "translation" exercise will become unfeasible. One suggestion that arose was the creation of guides, perhaps as web pages, which could be used by specific audiences: faculty could use as teaching (and self-training) aids, librarians could use as examples, and students could incorporate the information into their citation-creation process.

Barbara mentioned that you would be interested in setting up focus groups of librarians, and we would be pleased to assist in that endeavor; we can provide a list of interested discussion group members, and we can also provide names of faculty and students should you want to set up sessions with those groups.

We do appreciate all the effort that goes into each edition of the *MLA Handbook*, and we look forward to working with you to make this resource even more effective. Please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Helene C. Williams
Chair, Literary Reference Discussion Group

Literatures in English Section
Association of College and Research Libraries
American Library Association

Cc: Steven Harris, Chair, Literatures in English Section

ACRL Board of Directors to Vote on Dues Increase

At the June 2004 Annual Meeting, the ACRL Board of Directors passed a resolution, at the recommendation of Budget and Finance Committee, to consider a dues increase for certain categories of ACRL membership.

A variety of factors contributed to the development of the resolution, including the following:

- Although the "cost of doing business" has risen steadily over the past 15 years, ACRL has not raised member dues since 1991. Therefore, the dues revenue collected from each member has failed to keep pace with natural increases in operating expenses due to inflation.
- Advertising revenue from ACRL publications has decreased over the past few years and is not projected to rebound in the foreseeable future. Advertising revenue helps subsidize many member services including programs at the ALA Annual Conference, section newsletters, and committee activities such as standards development, awards, as well as recent major initiatives in the areas of scholarly communication and information literacy. The dues increase will help offset the reduction in advertising revenue and ensure that important ACRL programs and services receive the funding they need.
- Development of new programs and services that add value to membership will require funding. As outlined in our recently adopted strategic plan, in the coming years ACRL will be developing additional programs and services that assist members in the areas of technology, delivery of services,

standards development and implementation, issues papers, and local and national advocacy as requested in the recent member survey. The dues increase will provide necessary funding to make immediate progress on these important initiatives.

- After reviewing several options, the Budget and Finance Committee determined that a dues increase would be the best funding mechanism to provide the necessary capital to sustain ACRL's quality publications, continuing education programs, awards, standards development, and advocacy initiatives.

The proposed dues increase for personal members of ACRL is \$20, bringing annual dues to \$55. Student and retiree members will experience no dues increase at present. The Board plans to vote on adopting the resolution at its Midwinter Meeting in January. If the motion passes, a ballot to approve the dues increase will be distributed to all members in the spring of 2005.

The Board of Directors would like to hear from you as they consider this important decision. The first Board meeting at the Midwinter Meeting will include a 30-minute question and answer session in which we encourage you to participate. You may also contact individual board members (see the roster on the Web at <http://www.ala.org/acrl>, click on "About ACRL," then "ACRL Board of Directors," and "ACRL Board of Directors Roster") at your convenience to share your comments, questions, and ideas.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter and for your continued support of ACRL.

ALA Midwinter 2005 LES Schedule (DRAFT)

Saturday

8 -9 am Exec I (same location as wherever the MLA bib discussion is)

(9:30 - 12:30 MLA Bibliography Discussion -- WESS)

Sunday

8:30 -10 a.m. Reference Discussion Group

10:30 -12 p.m. Collections Discussion Group (same location as Reference)

1-3 p.m. General Membership Meeting

3:30 - 5 p.m. New Members Discussion Group (same location as General)

5:15 p.m. LES social hour (location TBD, probably near the location of New Members)

Monday

8- 9:30 a.m. All Committees

10:00 - 11 a.m. Exec II (same location as All Committees)

Personal and Institutional News

Charlotte Droll, Humanities Librarian at Wright State University, was selected to participate in Library Leadership Ohio (LLO). LLO is an intensive, residential leadership education program. Following a competitive application process she joined a group of 30 participants from around Ohio for a week in August. The leadership institute was facilitated by two leadership consultants and six mentors who are experienced library directors from around the state. LLO is funded in part through an Institute of Museum and Library Services grant awarded by the State Library of Ohio.

LES leadership has been a whirlwind movement lately. Chair **Jen Stevens** has left the mild climes of Pullman, Washington to

enter the volatile weather (both atmospheric and political) of Washington, D.C., specifically George Mason University.

On her drive east she may have passed former LES chair **Steven Harris** on the road. He is now Collection Development Librarian for Utah State University in Logan, Utah. You can send him a note at Steve.Harris@usu.edu.

Editor **Julie Still** sends a note of warning to all parents who attend ALA and leave their children home with a spouse. When she left for ALA Annual in Orlando the family did not own a dog, when she returned a 3 year old beagle had taken up residence. Whether this was a measure of retaliation for not taking the kids to Disney is unknown. She trembles at the thought of what might happen during Midwinter.

If you have news of note or just want the world to know you painted your house this spring, please send your information to still@camden.rutgers.edu.

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Biblio-Notes (ISSN 1076-8947) is published twice a year by the Literatures in English Section of the Association of College & Research Libraries, a division of the American Library Association (50 E. Huron St., Chicago IL, 60611; 800/545-2433 ext. 2519. Copies are free to members.

Contributions welcome. The editor especially encourages those who may not be able to travel to ALA meetings to contribute descriptions of new books of interest, essays on "My Life as a Humanities Librarian," "My Favorite Reference Tool" and "Personal and Institutional News." Deadlines for copy are roughly the end of September and the end of February of each year. Please contact the editor for the exact deadlines of specific issues.

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Studies of Interest to English and American
Literature Librarians (LES Bibliography):
www.public.iastate.edu/~dcoffey/studies/htm

MLA International Bibliography in Academic
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