



Biblio-Notes

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

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Notes from the Chair:

LES in New Orleans

The foundation is laid for a terrific line-up of LES events, discussions and meetings in New Orleans. We hope to see many of you there.

Our program for New Orleans is entitled "Cultural Studies in the Academic Library" and will be held on Saturday, June 24 from 1:30-3:30. Speakers include Professor Joel Dinerstein, of the Tulane University English Department, who will provide a practitioner's perspective; Jane Faulkner (UC Santa Barbara) and Rob Melton (UC San Diego), who will report on a survey of UC faculty who engage in Cultural Studies; and Mark Szarko, U. Washington, Bothell, who will speak on the challenges librarians face in building relevant collections and providing reference/instructional services for cultural studies faculty and students. Many thanks for the good work and creativity of the Program Planning Committee 2006 Chair, Rob Melton, and the Committee in creating a panel to address this timely and challenging topic.

Our Section hosts three of discussion groups for people to share experiences and advice. Two of these cover the realms of collection management and reference. The third, the New Members Discussion Group, provides a friendly atmosphere for people new to literary librarianship to explore topics with more seasoned colleagues. If there are particular matters that you'd like to talk about, please use the contact information provided in this newsletter to suggest agenda items to the appropriate discussion group chair. The Membership Forum is another venue the Section provides for developing expertise and sharing concerns and suggestions. Come to the All Committees meeting to participate in committee discussions and to find out which committee you might like to join.

Watch the LES-L list serve for further developments as well as the details of discussions and social gatherings. The list serve is where opportunities for learning, service to the profession and for collegiality during the Conference will be posted. The LES meeting schedule is included in this issue. Check the ALA Annual 2007 Web site later this spring and the conference program when you're on site for room assignments. Safe travels!

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LES Annual Meeting Schedule

Saturday, June 24

8-10 Executive I

1:30-3:30 Program

Sunday, June 25

8-10 Literary Reference Discussion Group

10:30-12:00 Collection Development Discussion Group

1:30-3:30 Membership Forum

4-5:30 New Members Discussion Group

5:30-? Reception

Monday, June 26

8-10 All Committees Meeting

10:30-12:00 Executive Committee II

Katrina and the UNO Library

As Katrina loomed offshore in the Gulf of Mexico the last week of August 2005, the administration of the University of New Orleans made the decision to close early that Saturday afternoon, to allow staff and students time to pack up and evacuate. Closures for hurricanes are pretty routine at UNO; in the eleven years I've worked as a librarian here we've probably closed the library an average of once each hurricane season. But most of the time the hurricanes don't end up coming close enough to cause major damage. Katrina hit the city just two days later, changing all of our lives.

It wasn't until several days after the storm had passed, as I struggled to grasp the implications of the storm for myself, my family, and the city, that I was able to get any information about the university. Eventually, I found UNO's temporary emergency website up and running, with a login for employees to check in and give contact information. We were assured that we would be paid at least for the next several weeks and were asked to check in weekly to report our whereabouts.

We had no initial reports on the state of the campus, but from news stories and satellite imagery on the web we could see that some of the deepest floodwaters in the city were in the neighborhoods near campus. We also heard that areas close to Lake Pontchartrain (near part of the rim of the "bowl" that is New Orleans) had been spared. Since our campus literally abuts the levees for Lake Pontchartrain, we had some hope that UNO might be at least partially dry. We heard later that about a week after the storm our Chancellor journeyed to the campus by boat with armed Coast Guard personnel in order to retrieve key material and equipment for the university's temporary headquarters at LSU in Baton Rouge.

As the days and weeks passed, more people "reported in" and the library staff began exchanging emails. Everyone was OK, though we were scattered all over the country. About one-fourth of the staff would never return to New Orleans. Some found better opportunities in the cities they settled in, and some just didn't want to face another hurricane season in the city. In order to continue to be paid by the university, we were asked to submit weekly "task reports" detailing how we were supporting the university or volunteering our

services at another local library. The idea was that if the university was going to pay you, that you should do some work or make some contribution to some library in exchange.

By late September the university announced plans to continue its fall semester, with most courses shifting online and a few being held at satellite locations in areas near New Orleans. At the same time the library was reconstituting itself "in exile." A small group of our staff was able to work at temporary offices provided at the LSU Library in Baton Rouge. Our Dean, one of our Reference Librarians, our Digital Initiatives Librarian, and a staff member from Serials were able to come in to work there. The rest of us found ways to contribute from remote locations. The reference librarians (scattered across several states) set up a schedule for monitoring the email reference account (more important than ever as a way to respond to students) and used the university website, which had a database of contact information for all employees, to track down faculty in their assigned areas and offer support for online courses. E-journals and e-books became our collection, which we guided users into through email exchanges. When a print copy of something was needed, our Digital Initiatives Librarian was able to scan texts "on demand" using the vast resources of the physical collection at LSU. Faculty and students were extremely appreciative of our efforts and suggested we made the sudden transition to online courses much easier.

Eventually another group of staff was able to settle back in their homes in the parishes near New Orleans, and many of them started coming in to staff a "library" at a satellite location in the suburbs. The library in this setting was essentially a computer in a computer lab where a staff person would sit and welcome questions on a range of things (how to find articles, how to use Blackboard, etc.). Though this was "public services" work, many of the staff there happened to be technical services staff, who were used working behind the scenes. Later we would talk about how the experience gave the library a new and clearer sense of mission and a desire to be more flexible and responsive to changing needs in thinking about what we do.

In early November our Dean informed us that the university was preparing to hold "mini sessions" on campus in December, and that the library would be one of two buildings open

during this initial phase of reopening the campus before the spring semester. All library staff were expected to report back to work at the library on December 5th, or begin taking leave. While some of the staff had by this time returned to homes with little or no damage in the larger metropolitan area of New Orleans, most of us were still living outside the city. Finding a place to live in New Orleans was suddenly very difficult. The University promised trailers to all staff and students who needed them, but the time frame for their availability was uncertain. (It turns out that the trailers weren't set up until late March.) People scrambled to find housing and about 70% of us showed up on that Monday.

As we greeted each other and swapped war stories back in the library (devoid of electricity or heat) we discovered that more damage had been done than initially thought. (The Dean and a few others had visited the library earlier in the fall, as part of a convoy of military vehicles that drove from LSU, traveling on top of the levee part of the way to avoid still-standing flood waters). Though the library building itself suffered little damage from the hurricane itself, the evacuees who had been dropped off on campus managed to break in to the library and cause some problems. Because they broke in through the large glass windows that front the lobby, water eventually blew in from subsequent rains and damaged carpets and furniture. Large sections of the first floor carpet and most of the upholstered chairs were removed. The entire contents of staff desks in affected areas were packed away by mold remediation workers hired in the months after the storm. Even those desks not touched for mold remediation had clearly been rummaged through by evacuees scrounging for food or drink. An empty wine bottle was left on the Collection Management Librarian's desk, and an abundance of animal hair (presumably from one or more dogs or cats) was spread about the Serials Office. Other, more distasteful messes (that I won't describe in detail here), had already been taken care of by clean-up teams.

Most of the books in the collection were fine, except for part of the Social Sciences collection on the library's third floor. No water had directly come in there, but the lack of air conditioning for so many weeks caused a mold outbreak (a problem we have struggled with in the past when we suffered extended power

outages), and several hundred books were removed for evaluation and mold remediation.

As the weeks passed the library gradually came back toward a semblance of normalcy. Because of our sudden staffing losses we had to scramble to redeploy staff within and between departments, speeding up a reorganization process that had been still in the planning stages. The public services/technical services divide has been bridged in many ways, as people have been asked to work in new areas as needed. Staff whose jobs were less busy now (book ordering, cataloging, Special Collections) were asked to help out in Serials, which was swamped under months of mail to be processed. We ended up closing up our Multimedia Room as a service point, and integrated much of that collection behind the main public services desk. Because many of the other buildings on campus weren't ready for occupancy, several administrative offices set up temporary shop in the library, including the Registrar, the Bursar, and Financial Aid. Though we were a little crowded, we did learn a lot about these groups on campus, by working almost elbow-to-elbow with them for a couple of weeks as the spring semester started.

One by one more campus buildings were cleaned up and reopened (though large tents were still being used to house some classes for which no classrooms were available). Though the campus now looks relatively normal on the surface, we are still reeling from the effects of the storm. We are bracing for a difficult financial year coming up, with funding cuts from the state and decreased revenue because of fewer tuition dollars (our student body has shrunk from about 15,000 to under 12,000). The entire campus is on pins and needles waiting to hear about expected cuts to entire academic programs and the termination of about 40-50 faculty positions (including tenured positions). The Library is apparently exempt from these personnel cuts because of promises made as part of an accreditation review the previous summer.

Though things are still very difficult, and the future appears unclear at best, there have been some positives. With the campus in so much flux and disarray, we were able to see ourselves as still very much essential to the teaching mission of the university. Our students and faculty needed us and were grateful for our efforts to reach them from afar. We also saw that we could change and

respond, very rapidly and under very trying circumstances, and this gives us hope that we can become whatever our university needs us to be in the uncertain days ahead.

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International Genre Fiction: Recommended Reference Works

In January, *Locus: The Magazine of the Science Fiction and Fantasy Field* published its annual recommended list. A number of reference books were included under nonfiction. Since LES has debated the worth of such extremely narrow subject-oriented works, it might be worthwhile to note that some do have a quite passionate, if small, audience. *Locus* reviewers and editors have chosen the following as worthwhile from the flood of reference works in 2005: *Supernatural Literature of the World* edited by S.T. Joshi and Stefan Dziemianowicz (Greenwood); *Historical Dictionary of Fantasy Literature*, by Brian Stableford (Scarecrow); *Fantasy Literature for Children and Young Adults: Fifth Edition* by Ruth Nadelman Lynn (Libraries Unlimited); *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Science Fiction and Fantasy: Themes, Works, and Wonders*, edited by Gary Westfahl (Greenwood).

The only *Locus* recommendation in my library is *Latin American Science Fiction Writers: an A-Z Guide*, conveniently shelved next to its companion, *Latin American Mystery Writers: an A-Z Guide*, both edited by Darrell B. Lockhart and published by Greenwood. Although *Locus* does not mention the latter, both books are organized on the same principles and in response to the same motive: to position each genre as a "major presence in Latin American literature." The prefaces to each volume are nearly identical, differing only in the details. After a historical introduction, each book launches into its A-Z guide, listing authors "under surname or the name they are best known by." Each article is 1-4 pages long, well written (usually by a professor), informative, evaluative, and followed by a bibliography of the author's works in the genre and works of criticism about the author. Most of the works listed are, as we might expect, in

Spanish or Portuguese, but criticism in English and translations of authors' works into English are duly identified when they exist. Each volume ends with a non-author specific bibliography of anthologies and criticism arranged by country and an index. The authors selected range from those who produced only a single genre work among a score of other publications including "serious" literature to those primarily identified as science fiction or mystery writers.

The tip of the Latin American Science Fiction iceberg has emerged in recent years with Ursula K. Le Guin's translation of Angelica Gorodischer's *Kalpa Imperial* (Small Beer Press, 2003) and the anthology, *Cosmos Latinos* (Wesleyan UP, 2003). Lockhart's reference work covering 70 Latin American SF writers is a valuable contribution to this field, providing much information not found elsewhere in English - especially not since Neil Barron's classic SF reference book, *Anatomy of Wonder* eliminated its "foreign language" section from its latest two editions. Lockhart's introduction gives an account of the genre's marginalization under the shadow of "the extremely overdetermined use of magical realism that exploded in the 1960's" and its current recovery under the influence of a more tolerant "cultural studies." His historical account of the genre begins as early as the 18th century with the Franciscan Friar, Manuel Antonio de Rivas, in Mexico. Most of the authors in the volume are from Argentina, Mexico and Cuba, but authors from Peru, Chile, Brazil and Uruguay are also here.

Latin American Mystery Writers contains essays on 55 authors, none of them repeated from the SF volume although several have been identified as writing in both genres. One of the surprises here for me was Jorge Luis Borges, whom I had always identified as a fantasist rather than a mystery writer. It turns out, however, that although he only wrote three stories that can be properly considered mysteries, he was a great aficionado of the genre, primarily as produced in England, and wrote a number of influential essays advocating for their acceptance. Lockhart's translation of Mempo Gardinelli's "The Hardboiled Detective Novel in Latin America" serves as introduction to this volume. Gardinelli argues that the mistrust and cynicism that people feel towards the police in Latin American countries due to their role in enforcing the whims of

unscrupulous rulers instead of an impartial justice render the hard-boiled the only viable form of Latin American mystery. This is clearly Gardinelli's point of view rather than an accurate portrayal of the book's content, since a number of the authors included here, including Borges, were advocates of the classic puzzle mystery.

I would strongly recommend both these volumes to any library, academic or public, serving an audience with interests either in these genres or in Latin American literature. They are not comprehensive - Lockhart even admits that at least as many authors were left out as were included - but they are groundbreaking and open up new vistas of research and translation.

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Sandra Scofield Collection

Sandra Scofield, a writer whose unflinching and unsentimental approach to stories about families has garnered numerous awards and honors, recently donated her papers to The Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library located at Texas Tech University in Lubbock, Texas. Her most recent publication, *Occasions of Sin: A Memoir*, was praised by Art Winslow of the *Chicago Tribune* for "its groping sense of honesty and its plain-spoken, understated pain."

Scofield's work often explores both the stresses and resiliency of families dealing with geographic and emotional separation. Her first two novels, *Gringa* (1989) and *Beyond Deserving* (1991), offer examples of Scofield's themes, settings, and characters. *Gringa*, which received a New American Writing Award, is the story of Abby Painter, a young woman from an impoverished West Texas family who relocates to Mexico and lives with a jealous Mexican bull-fighter and rancher. Though the dust-jacket calls this a story about "the pathology of passivity," Abby finally makes an effort to escape the exotic and seductive jungle of emotions and intrigue that envelopes her. Scofield's next novel, *Beyond Deserving*, was a 1991 finalist for a National Book Award. This novel is a complex family saga with thoroughly endearing characters who, almost

without exception, do nothing to deserve the love and kindness that they show each other, or the bitterness and anger. Katie, the central character, lives in Oregon with her husband, an alcoholic veteran of the Vietnam Conflict. Their young daughter, Rhea, lives with Katie's mother in West Texas because Katie, admittedly somewhat immature and self-involved herself, sees her estrangement from her daughter as necessary for her daughter's well-being.

The Sandra Scofield Collection, which is now open for research, offers many research opportunities for students and scholars interested in women's studies, literature of place, and creative writing processes and techniques. The collection contains a variety of materials detailing Scofield's literary and scholarly works, including published and unpublished novels, short stories, poems, reviews, and plays, as well as photographs, workshop and conference materials, and academic work and teaching materials. Interestingly, while preparing these papers for shipment to the library, Scofield personalized the collection with handwritten notes on several boxes and folders and brief typed histories of each book's creation and publication.

Sandra Scofield was born in 1943 in Wichita Falls, Texas, and grew up there, with a brief stay in Ohio. When her family moved to Odessa, Scofield went to boarding school in Ft. Worth. She graduated from Odessa High School in 1960 and studied at Odessa Junior College and the University of Texas, where she graduated with a B.A. in Speech in 1964. She also attended Northern Illinois University (1967-68), working on an M.A. in Theatre (uncompleted) and she received an M.A. (1977) and Ph.D. (1979) from the University of Oregon, focusing on reading and language education. Scofield held a variety of teaching jobs in Oregon, but stopped working in 1983 in order to write full time. Since then she has published six novels and a memoir, in addition to numerous book reviews, scholarly publications, and short stories. A list of her publications includes *Gringa* (1989), *Beyond Deserving* (1991), *Walking Dunes* (1992) *More Than Allies* (1993), *Opal on Dry Ground* (1994), *A Chance to See Egypt* (1996) *Plain Seeing* (1997) and *Occasions of Sin: a Memoir* (2004).

She occasionally teaches writing at workshops across the country. She received a National

Endowment for the Arts Fellowship in 1991 and her novel, *A Chance to See Egypt*, received the Best Fiction award from the Texas Institute of Letters in 1997. Scofield maintains a website at sandrascofield.com.

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My Future Life as a Humanities Librarian

When I explain to people that I am in school to become a librarian, one of the most common questions is whether librarian had been on my list of things I wanted to be when I grew up. As I explore my own inspirations and motivations for a career as a librarian, I find that the answer to this is more complex than I even realized. The simple answer is no, as an eight year old, librarian was not included in my top three choices of occupation, which were: housepainter, farmer or pom-pom girl. However, while I was busy planning for these careers (none of which ever came to fruition unless you count ownership of a few chickens as "farmer"), I was also carefully sorting my books on my shelves, putting envelopes and cards in the back in order to stamp their due dates and checking them out to my collection of stuffed animals. When not serving the stuffed patrons from my own book collection, I was an enthusiastic patron of other libraries. I have distinct memories of the different libraries I visited and the different books I checked out. My fondest memories are of walking through the stacks, touching each book as I passed it, waiting for a book to catch my attention. There was just something about the touch and the feel of the book that had a certain mystical quality to it.

It is obvious that my positive reaction to, and experiences with books and libraries has played a large role in my current career path. In very simple terms it seems that a major reason for my wanting to be a librarian is because I like books. I like to read books, I like to browse through books, I like to see rows and rows of books waiting to be explored and I like to share books with others. If I had wanted to be a librarian when I was eight, I would have imagined a life surrounded by impossibly tall stacks of books with ladders and spiral

staircases leading to journals and rare manuscripts. Now however, this image has changed; books are being removed from libraries, journals are virtual, and spiral staircases lead to internet café's. I find myself in conflict with my inner child's memory of what a library should be and an MLS student's vision for the future of the profession.

I recently completed a course studying human information behavior. This course made me question my ideas about libraries, books and information in general. As my classmates presented on the information seeking habits of different groups of people, I found myself thinking, but what about books? Doesn't anyone get their information from books anymore?

These questions were answered when I began to research my assigned group, humanities scholars. Finally, here was a group who needed and used books, whose "soul lies between the covers of a scholarly manuscript" (Thompson 2002). Early studies into the information seeking behavior of this group of scholars placed an emphasis on primary resources along with a need to browse and experience serendipitous discovery. Humanists were described as "probably the most book-bound creatures in the world of scholarship" (Weintraub 1980). Recent studies propose the fact that this profile has not changed drastically, with humanists "relying heavily on the monograph format for both primary and secondary materials" (Thompson 2002). A recent study of English literature researchers found that there is a heavy reliance on browsing, with concerns that "an electronic library would deprive them of the possibility to browse and discover information through serendipity" (Ellis 2005).

I focused much of my part of this group project on the fact that physical contact with a primary source is still an essential part of humanities research and libraries need to keep that in mind when working on collection management and development. I emphasized the need for a scholar to connect with an item, not just read the content of the source. In direct contrast to my conclusions, another member of my group focused on newly developed digital resources and the future of humanities research in a virtual world. I could not understand her overlooking how important primary sources were and she could not understand why I was so stuck on the need for real books. When our parts were presented

together, I was able to see a valid argument for a mix of physical and digital that would best serve the population.

While I can see the potential for digital sources, I am not able to give up the belief that touching the spine, turning the pages, and feeling the imprint are important elements in research. If the soul of a humanities scholar lies between the covers of a scholarly manuscript, then it can be said that the soul of a library lies between the bookends on the stacks. The strong-willed eight-year old in me will not let go of the magical qualities of books, so as further argument for the importance of primary sources, she suggests that it is highly unlikely that a digital scan of the book "The Neverending Story" read on a PC screen would have resulted in the same adventures for Bastian Balthazar Bux as reading the primary source in a cold attic during a rainstorm did.

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**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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