



# Biblio-Notes

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Arab-Israeli conflict in a single, egalitarian, democratic nation rather than separate Israeli and Palestinian states. His enemies, ironically, tried to portray him (to create a narrative of him, as it were) as a terrorist sympathizer. It was a fiction drawn out of thin air; Said lived a life of passionate compassion.

In recent months, three shining lights of the

literary world went out. George Plimpton, Walter J. Ong, and Edward Said all died within a few weeks of one another in August and September. Each in his own way, these three men made significant contributions to American (and world) letters.

Plimpton was, perhaps, best known for his "participatory journalism," in which he demonstrated the difficulty of various, often athletic, activities by trying and failing miserably at them himself. Yet, his most significant contribution to modern letters was largely unknown and unacknowledged by the general public. In 1953, Plimpton helped found and was appointed the first editor of *The Paris Review* and has served in that capacity (with a changing list of assistants) ever since. The main characteristics of the journal's fashion. Plimpton was always the engine that drove the journal's passion.

Edward Said was arguably the most significant American literary critic and theorist of the last 50 years. Although not native-born, I will claim him for America by virtue of a career spent at Columbia University. Said's great passion was to demonstrate the power of narrative to influence, for good or bad, the social, political, and psychological realms of human existence. His 1978 book *Orientalism*, which virtually inaugurated the post-colonial approach to literature, demonstrated the destructive and oppressive power of Europe's orientalist narrative over the inhabitants of the Middle East. A Palestinian by birth, Said was a tireless advocate of the Palestinian cause. As a humanist, however, he always recognized the commonality of Arabs and Jews in the Middle East. In later years, he saw the solution to the

## **Early English Books Selection: Bridging the Gap**

Librarians, academics, and publishers all working together to achieve a common goal sounds almost impossible, doesn't it? Yet, the University of Michigan's Text Creation Partnership (TCP) has done exactly that.

do these things, and EEBO-TCP has created a database that will meet the needs of individual scholars who have and will continue to share their expertise; researchers in general will have one of the largest historic corpora at their fingertips which will be searchable at a level previously impossible; the community as a whole will maintain ownership of these valuable texts for sharing across platforms for any number of scholarly uses. It's even possible to see how resources such as EEBO-TCP are beginning to change research. The winner of the EEBO in undergraduate essay contest said that EEBO allowed her to do her research "with an ease and flexibility that would not have been possible without such a resource." That ease and flexibility both between electronic and print, between text and image, between libraries and scholars will one day revolutionize how we view the past and it is exciting to be at the frontier of this kind of work.

The task force included faculty members William Bowen (University of Toronto), Jennifer Danby (CUNY-Graduate Center), Robert Hatch (University of Florida), Arthur Kinney (University of Massachusetts), Ian Lancashire (University of Toronto), Steven Mullaney (University of Michigan), Hillary Nunn (University of Akron), Martin Powers (University of Michigan), Michael Schoenfeldt (University of Michigan), Tess Tavormina (Michigan State University). Libraries were also well represented by Stuart Dempster (Joint Information Systems Committee - UK), Jane Faulkner (University of California - Santa Barbara), Agnes Widder (Michigan State University), Perry Willett (Indiana University). The commercial publishing sector participants included Jo-Anne Hogan and Mary Sauer-Games, both from ProQuest Information and Learning, and finally, from the University of Michigan team William Gosling, Chris Powell, David Richtmyer, Mark Sandler, Matt Stoeffler, and John Price Wilkin attended in addition to Maria Bonn, Olivia Bottum, Marika Ismail, Rina Kor, Jennifer Keitzman, John Latta, Mona Logarbo, Shawn Martin, Paul Schaffner, members of the EEBO-TCP staff.

For further information about the selection task force or the EEBO-TCP

Project, please visit the website at <http://www.lib.umich.edu/eebo> or contact Shawn Martin at [shawnmar@umich.edu](mailto:shawnmar@umich.edu)

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## **My Life as a Humanities Librarian: The First Year**

As of today, September 23, 2003, I am one year old. As a literature librarian, that is. I graduated from the University of British Columbia with my MLIS degree in April of 2002, and hung out my shingle as the University of Oregon's literature librarian just a few months after that. I'm officially responsible for English, American, Commonwealth, comparative, and French literatures, and unofficially responsible for various outposts of film, theatre, Spanish literature, and all things Canadian. The latter is because I'm an imported Canuck, and therefore the default subject specialist on Robertson Davies, back bacon, and sub-zero temperatures.

It's an interesting time to be an infant. I feel incredibly lucky to have stumbled into a job that suits my interests and background so precisely. I also sometimes feel extremely uncertain about my own

have a broad background knowledge of its central works, from *The Faerie Queene* to *The Color Purple*. I'm not only a reader but a writer, and this job gives me what every writer needs: a daily banquet of interesting questions and obscure tidbits, news of new works and reminders of old ones. It's a job that could keep me happy and well fed for many, many years to come.

It's also a trickier job than it seems. I figured this out the first time I tried my hand at collection development, a task that has not become any easier after a year of practice. Like many, if not most, academic libraries, our library is facing budget cuts. I follow in the footsteps of the estimable Richard Heinzkill, who stewarded the literature collections here at the University of Oregon for thirty-three years, and who built a broad, deep, and diverse research collection. I would like nothing better than to continue to collect at the level Richard did, but our budget no longer allows for this. Our relative and actual buying power has been cut steadily over the years, and I practice a very different kind of collection development from Richard's. I rely much more heavily on consortial holdings (we belong to a large book-lending consortium of research libraries in Washington and Oregon) when making order decisions, and must spend most of my budget just acquiring core items. Like many libraries, we're moving from an ownership model to an access one. In the short term, this may be a good strategy. In the long term, it means that we have a smaller, shallower circulating collection, and that publishers are selling fewer books. What does this mean for future scholarship, and for academic humanities collections overall? Well, it almost certainly means that more change is coming down the pike.

The future of literature librarianship, and of humanities librarianship generally, is perplexing to me. I cannot imagine a future in which literature collections are strictly self-serve, no matter what difficulties we face in funding and support. After only a year in the profession, it's clear to me that students and faculty can't possibly navigate all of these materials unaided, let alone negotiate with publishers and vendors, or maintain

collections for the future. That's what librarians do; that (among other things) is our particular expertise. If we were to disappear, the collections themselves would mean little, and would quickly degrade into even less. No matter how embattled our positions sometimes seem, I can't imagine our extinction.

I can, however, imagine the progressive

loggerheads, more literature graduates than positions for them, and so on. The more fundamental problems—the causative problems—aren't new either, but they seem graver than ever in this tiring economy.

Appreciation for humanist enterprise seems to be declining in this country. Literature professors rarely garner huge research grants, as scientists do. A BA in English literature is rarely the stepping-stone to a prestigious, highly paid job, as a Bachelor's in accounting may be. These are not revelations, and neither is it a revelation that in tight financial times, humanities funding is often first to be cut. It's worth noting, however, that

Membership Forum will be from 2-4 on Sunday, January 11 (location TBA). We hope many of you can join us.

The Membership Committee invites current and prospective LES members to a (no-host) reception immediately following the Membership Forum in San Diego. Please reserve Sunday, January 11 after 4pm for conversation and drinks with your colleagues. The exact time and location will be posted to LES-L as the conference approaches. We'll hope to see many of you there.

~The LES Membership Committee~

## **Your Views Wanted**

This request for assistance arose from questions I had as I began liaison duties related to the English Department. I wondered what variations of the liaison structure exist to serve the same needs for the same department at other colleges or universities; I wondered if the librarians serving as bibliographers in one library, subject librarians in another, or liaisons in a third library, have a great deal of overlap in the activities they perform. To what degree do the activities overlap, and is there a relationship between the organizational model and the activities receiving the most attention? Another question I have is, would there be a pattern relating the size of the library to the particular organizational structure employed (bibliographer, subject librarian, liaison)?

These questions, along with a few others, drive this research project. The research I've done presents few answers, so I'm turning to a group of people who work with the same department I do, in an effort to find out more. Librarians who are members of the Literatures in English Section of the Association for College and Research Libraries seem to be a likely resource group to which I should turn.

I'm hoping you will fill out a survey to help me answer some of these questions. The attached survey is made of 10 questions, and should take no more than 10

minutes of your time. It is available online, you may print it out and mail it in, or if you prefer, please feel free to fill out this survey online, at

<http://www.lib.ecu.edu/Reference/Survey/EnglishSurvey.cfm>.

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Note from the editor: This request was sent to the LES chair and subsequently the executive committee for review before being considered for publication in this newsletter. If you are beginning a research project and would like some feedback on your methodology please do consider posting a note to LES-L, or, if your research is pertinent to LES members and involves participatory measures such as surveys, email the chair or the editor and ask about the possibility of putting a notice, similar to this one, in the newsletter. Brief notes on research in progress are also welcomed.

## **Change in LES Officers**

Jeanne Pavy, recently elected vice chair of LES, notified the executive committee that due to a change in circumstances she would be unable to serve in that capacity. The executive board approached Jen Stevens, who had also been a candidate for that office, about serving in Jeanne's stead. Jen graciously agreed. Please note that this change in leadership took place quietly, peacefully, and with no hanging chads or political upheaval.

## **News from the Field**

There has been a slight ruckus in Library Land lately over Archie McPhee's marketing

[rent/11247.html](#)). The model for the figure is a real life librarian, Nancy Pearl. The figure is dressed in a long skirt, sensible shoes, and a cardigan. She also has “shushing action.” Accessories include a stack of random literature (the figure is holding Pearl’s latest book, *Book Lust*), a “realistic” library card, bookmarks and a trading card. The faux Pearl retails for \$8.95. McPhee also sells action figures of Rose the Riveter, Albert Einstein, Jesus, Ben Franklin, Cleopatra, the Albino Bowler, and Pee Boy.

Other products trading on the librarian name and reputation lately include Bacardi (“Librarian by Day, Bacardi by Night”) and Honda (“The automotive equivalent of a really hot librarian. Good-looking, yet intelligent. Fun, yet sophisticated”)

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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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