

Cites & Insights

Crawford at Large
Libraries • Policy • Technology • Media

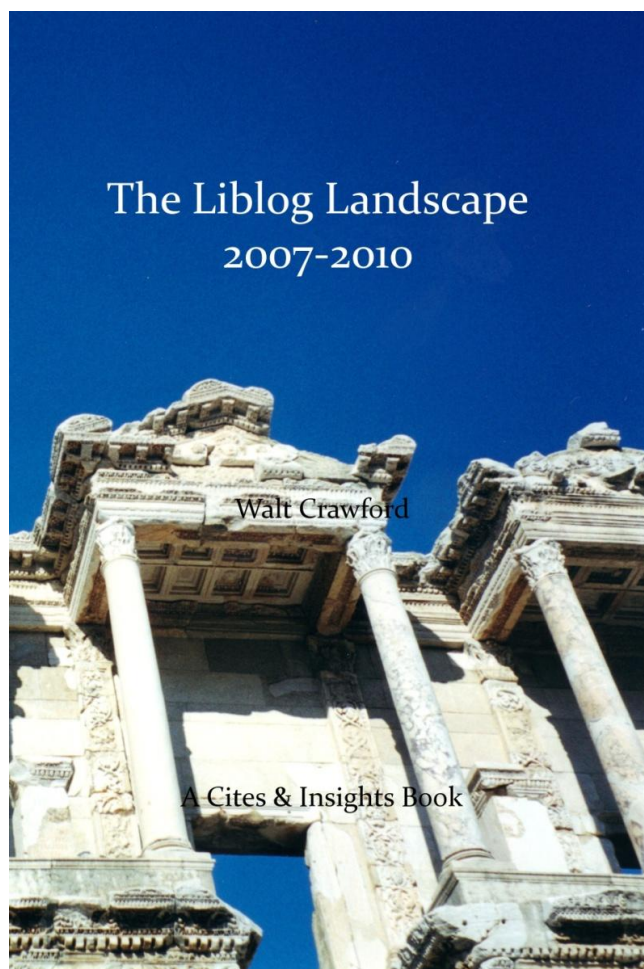
Volume 11, Number 1: January 2011

ISSN 1534-0937

Walt Crawford

Bibs & Blather

The Liblog Landscape 2007-2010



The most comprehensive study of liblogs (and, I suspect, the most comprehensive study of blogs in any specific field) is now available and discounted through the end of ALA Midwinter 2011. You can order it now at www.lulu.com/content/9829119.

The Liblog Landscape 2007-2010 looks at every English-language liblog (blog by a self-identified library/archives/museum person, or blog about li-

brary/archives/museum issues, that isn't an official blog offering an institution's or groups views) that had a presence on the open web in early summer 2010 and at least one post before June 1, 2010.

That's 1,304 liblogs from more than two dozen countries.

Even though this book does not include profiles for individual liblogs (unlike *The Liblog Landscape 2007-2008*, now out of print, and *But Still They Blog: The Liblog Landscape 2007-2009*, still available), it covers so much ground and with so much analysis of the recent history of English-language liblogs that the book is still a fairly thick paperback: 241 print pages (including 4 pages of front matter and a 20-page index of blogs).

The book looks at key metrics for March-May 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010: Primarily number of posts, average length per post and average comments per post, as well as changes in those metrics and patterns of metrics, but also total length and total comments.

Inside This Issue

Interesting & Peculiar Products.....	2
The Liblog Landscape 2007-2010: Chapter 3	9
Trends & Quick Takes.....	18
The CD-ROM Project	22
Offtopic Perspective: Legends of Horror, Part 2	24
My Back Pages.....	29

The book also discusses overall lifespan, number of posts and posts per month for most of the blogs—and other secondary metrics such as software, country in which the blog was (apparently) written, when blogs began and how current the most recent post was (as of May 31, 2010).

On sale now

The 241-page 6×9" (trade) paperback, on 60# cream book paper, costs \$35.00, or you can buy the PDF download for \$22.50. From now through the end of ALA Midwinter 2011, both versions have an early-bird 25% discount for a final price of \$26.25

(plus shipping and handling) paperback, \$16.88 (no shipping or handling) PDF.

But wait! There's more...

I didn't include individual liblog profiles this time around because the book would have been far too thick (at three profiles per page, that's another 430+ pages!) and because the profiles are too much work for the limited audience. But the profiles are also interesting. So here's an offer:

For each copy sold, I'll post four individual blog profiles on *Walt at Random*...doing them in absolute alphabetic order.

"Absolute alphabetic order" is the sort order Excel provides including initial articles, punctuation and all.

So if the book sells 326 copies, I'll post all the profiles...sooner or later.

Part publishing

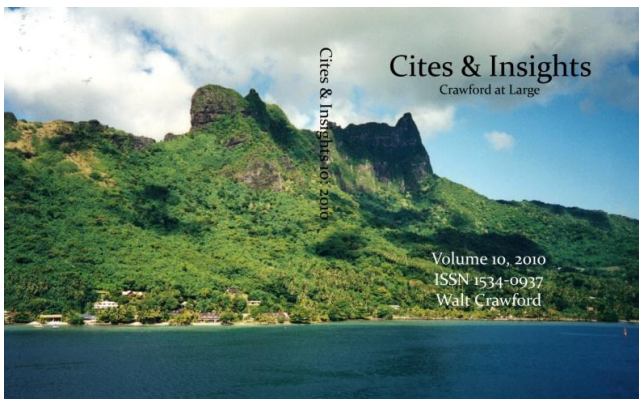
Portions of the book have appeared or will appear in *Cites & Insights*, but Chapter 1 and the index will *not* appear in C&I. Chapter 2 (in draft form) appeared in the December 2010 *C&I*. Chapter 3 appears in this issue. Additional chapters may appear in future issues, depending on a number of factors, including the continued health of *C&I* itself.

The Way We Blog

A few *Walt at Random* readers may remember that I used *The Way We Blog* as a working title for this project at one point.

If there seems to be serious interest in the ongoing history of liblogs, at the moment a very big "if," that title and approach may be used for a five-year version adding 2011 data. "Serious interest" involves *some* people buying the book.

Cites & Insights 10 in Book Form



The paperback version of *Cites & Insights 10: 2010* is now available for purchase through Lulu at

www.lulu.com/content/9687359. The 419-page 8.5 × 11" paperback includes all twelve issues, the indices and an overall table of contents.

All print volumes of *C&I* are priced at \$50 paperback, \$40 PDF, but there's a 20% discount on print volumes of *C&I* through the end of ALA Midwinter 2011, so the paperback currently costs \$40 and the PDF currently costs \$32.

I produce these at least in part because it's the easiest and cheapest way to have a high-quality bound volume for my own use. I think they'd be great for library school libraries and possibly collections on experimental publishing, but if I got even five sales for a given volume, I'd be astonished—and pleased.

The cover is based on a photograph taken by Linda A. Driver off Moorea in 2001.

Interesting & Peculiar Products **Resistance is Futile?**

I've written about the borgs among us before, specifically in one of my favorite "disContent" columns in *EContent Magazine*. Back then my prime examples of borgs were Bluetooth devices wearing people, apparently on a semi-permanent basis—specifically, devices that didn't even allow their people to remove them while on a plane, where the cell phone itself couldn't be used. (I've come to think of the devices as wearing the people, rather than the other way around.) And, as with those white earbuds wearing people, one characteristic of borgs is that they're not really where they appear to be—they are, at least partially, in some version of Other. That's why they tend to run into you on crowded walkways and, if you're really unlucky, on the road: They're not really *here*.

It may be getting a lot worse, if the Gurus of Augmented Reality have their way. Apparently, just looking at a cityscape or landscape is so 20th century: You should be staring at your permaconnection so it can tell you what's *interesting* about what it sees through its camera. As Brian X. Chen put it in an August 25, 2009 post at *Wired's* Gadget Lab, "If You're Not Seeing Data, You're Not Seeing."

Clearly, Chen thinks the lead paragraph should be enticing:

As you shove your way through the crowd in a baseball stadium, the lenses of your digital glasses display the names, hometowns and favorite hob-

bies of the strangers surrounding you. Then you claim a seat and fix your attention on the batter, and his player statistics pop up in a transparent box in the corner of your field of vision.

Your reaction to that future may say a lot about whether you're a borg-in-waiting or a potential member of The Resistance (futile as we may be). Way back in August 2009, you couldn't get anything close to the "perfectly augmented world" that the article touts—you had to settle for, you know, *ads*, because spending five minutes without ads would be so dreary. Since I neither have nor much crave a smartphone, chances are I'll be one of the last to be absorbed into this future—with luck, I might be absorbed into the ground first. There are *definitely* worthwhile uses for augmented-reality technologies, in assistive technology and elsewhere. As a ubiquitous part of daily life? Shudder.

I should note a February 13, 2010 *Technology Review* article on "Augmented Identity" touting an app that "makes it possible to identify people and learn about them just by pointing your phone." The prototype software, Recognizr, has one big virtue: You can't be identified unless you've opted in by uploading a photo and profile of yourself. You can probably count me out. (As one commenter notes, what's to stop somebody else from taking your picture and "volunteering" you to participate—particularly, say, a mean-spirited ex-lover or ex-friend?)

USB 3.0 Arrives

Do you have applications where USB 2.0 is a bottleneck? I must admit I don't, but I also don't have half-terabyte backups or lots of video stuff. If you're frustrated by the snail's pace of USB 2.0 (a mere 480 mb/s or 60 MB/s), you might be waiting for USB 3.0, which can theoretically handle 5 *gigabits* per second (that is, 5000 mb/s or 625 MB/s).

A May 2010 *PC World* writeup covers four early USB 3.0 hard drives. They're not particularly expensive—what consumer hard disks are? They run \$180 for a 1TB Seagate to \$240 for a 2TB Iomega. (The Seagate's a 5400RPM drive; the others—the Iomega and two \$200 units, a 1.5TB Buffalo and 1TB Western Digital—are all 7200RPM.) The 7200RPM units are *fast*, reading 3.7GB of files in 39 to 40 seconds and copying 3.7GB of files in 55 to 57 seconds. The article finds that the drives all

work noticeably faster running USB 3.0 than running FireWire 800 (which has a transfer rate of, you guessed it, 800mb/s) and anywhere from twice to 3.5 times as fast as USB 2.0. Ten times as fast? Not in these applications. Of course, if you have a notebook computer, you may be out of luck until you upgrade. For desktops, you can buy an adapter card for \$30. USB 3.0 also consumes less power than USB 2.0.

Reading Those Diskettes?

Given up on reading microdiskettes (the hard-shell 3.5" diskettes)? So have I—but if you're a data archaeologist, you have to go back to *true* floppies—diskettes with exposed media. The *real* pioneers were 8" and came in a bewildering variety of incompatible physical formats, but more stuff is probably on 5.25" minidiskettes. (I still have dozens of Tyvek sleeves for minidiskettes and boxes to store them in—mostly because they're nearly the perfect size to house 12cm discs—CD-Rs and DVDs and the like.)

Jason Scott offers a "Review of the FC5025 5.25" Floppy to USB Adapter" at *ASCII* on February 18, 2010—and if you have the need to read some of these very old diskettes, you should read the review. The device comes from Device Side Data, it sells for "roughly \$60" and it's only part of what you need: It comes with software to translate many old diskette formats, the USB adapter and a circuit board—but not the 5.25" drive itself. So unless you have a working drive or can find one, it's not that much help. Scott also mentions in passing that there are a number of external 3.5" drives with USB cables, costing \$50 to \$200; he recommends buying the cheapie.

Life Recorders

"Life Recorders May Be This Century's Wrist Watch." That's the headline on Michael Arrington's September 6, 2009 *TechCrunch* item—and it may be another one where your reaction to the first paragraph says a lot about you:

Imagine a small device that you wear on a necklace that takes photos every few seconds of whatever is around you, and records sound all day long. It has GPS and the ability to wirelessly upload the data to the cloud, where everything is date/time and geo stamped and the sound files are automatically transcribed and indexed. Photos of people,

of course, would be automatically identified and tagged as well.

The idea isn't new; one Microsoft researcher has been "lifeblogging" for many years, presumably yielding the vision in the second paragraph:

Imagine an entire lifetime recorded and searchable. Imagine if you could scroll and search through the lives of your ancestors.

Arrington thinks he would wear such a device—and sees them "becoming as ubiquitous as wrist watches were in the last century." He raises and immediately dismisses the privacy issue. And, as you'd expect from Arrington, he doesn't phrase the issue as *whether* you (all of you) will wind up with this "never forget anything" dystopia, but *when*:

But these devices are coming. And you have to decide if you'll be one of the first or one of the last to use one.

How about "never"? Will that work for you? He included a poll that yielded 5,322 votes (so far), with a bizarrely even outcome that may reflect *TechCrunch's* readership: 49.64 said "Of course I would. Recording my whole life is a dream come true" while 50.36%—36 more—said "Uh, no. Hell no."

As for wristwatches? Guess what: Lots of young people wear them and lots of those watches have analog dials.

Finding "Duplicate" Images

Here's an interesting idea: MindGem's \$25 Visual Similarity Duplicate Image Finder. It looks for duplicate filenames across a set of folders you specify—but it also looks at the images, even when they're in different formats, to consider similarity. Once it's done, it shows you a list of images it thinks are duplicates or very similar, rates their similarity and lets you compare them and delete ones that are actually redundant. You can try it for free, but the freebie won't actually delete files.

Format Wars Redux

Anders Bylund wrote "The format wars: of lasers and (creative) destruction" on...well, "last updated 11 months ago" as of December 10, 2010, so "sometime in January 2010" at *ars technica*. It *should* be a brief history of "format wars"—e.g., why VHS defeated Betamax in the consumer marketplace (Betamax stayed around a *lot* longer in the professional environment) and how long that took (about a decade), the odd wars in large-format vi-

deodiscs (which get no coverage to speak of), the "war" in which DVDs mostly eliminated VHS (except you can still buy DVD player/VCR combos, you can still buy blank VHS and S-VHS cassettes, and lots of libraries still circulate VHS), and the very brief Blu-ray/HD DVD "war." It has a little of that, but it's curiously free of facts in many cases, such as *how long* it actually took for DVDs to become more popular than VHS (a lot longer than you might remember).

Because this is really another "physical media are *dead, dead, dead*, and the sooner the better" article and another case in which *ars technica* derides Blu-ray without apparently understanding it. The author seems to think almost nobody can see the difference between Blu-ray and DVD anyway, and of course Everybody Knows Streaming Conquers All. So it's a little disappointing. The 99 comments are interesting—I'd say at least two-thirds of them are from people who damn well *can* see the difference and are aware that most of us aren't going to have 30mbps broadband in the near future. When some others say "but *most people* don't care," the answer is what it should be: If there are tens of millions who *do* care, it would be crazy of studios to shut down Blu-ray production just because there are even more who don't.

Desktop Touch Screens

Having poked at Michael Arrington and *TechCrunch* earlier, I should note "Why Desktop Touch Screens Don't Really Work Well for Humans," posted October 12, 2009. He's looking at HP's TouchSmart all-in-one desktops with touch screens, and even uses one. (He says the TouchSmart weighs "something like 60 lbs.," which seems a bit bizarre unless that big screen is a *lot* bigger than it looks, but never mind...)

Although he uses one he says

the machine is still all wrong. Anyone who has used one for a long time will tell you that they quickly revert to using the keyboard and mouse. And it isn't because of the software or touch technology—both are fine.

The problem is that you get tired keeping your hands up and on the screen for a long period of time. Touch experts I've spoken with say it's because your hands are above your heart, which isn't comfortable for very long.

Which sounds exactly right to me—not necessarily the "hands above the heart," but the strangeness of

dealing with a touch screen at that distance and in that form, at least for very long. I even wonder whether a touch screen on a notebook would work well in the long run.

Ah, but this is Arrington and *TechCrunch*. After noting that Microsoft's Surface computer (a low table with touch technology) works well, he says the proper layout for a desktop touch machine is an architect's desk—a slightly inclined desktop that is a touch screen for your computer. And then:

With the advances in touch technology most users won't need any peripheral input device (keyboard, mouse, etc.) to be productive on inclined desktop touch screen machine.

I view the urge to dismiss physical keyboards as old-fashioned with some of the same bemusement that I view the urge to get rid of print books. Maybe "productive" for Arrington doesn't involve lots of text and data entry, but for me it does—and a physical keyboard with tactile response is *by far* the best way to do that.

QUEd Up?

Plastic Logic has been around since 2000 and, according to Wikipedia, has more than \$200 million in funding. It's got great promises, primarily of superthin large flexible displays—and the QUE pro-Reader, with an 8.5x11" screen, tough enough so you can drop it, weighing less than a pound, able to read almost any kind of document...and with battery life in days.

It was supposed to ship in 2009. It didn't. Then it was supposed to ship in the summer of 2010. Robert Boer devoted his July/August 2010 "info insider" column in *EContent Magazine* to the QUE, mentioning that he'd been following it for more than a year, noting its many virtues and ending with this paragraph:

Yet even if QUE meets all my e-reader requirements, will it suffer the Betamax fate—a superior product that couldn't win sufficient market share?

The QUE is indeed new and appealing, but technology waits for no product. The clock is ticking.

Fast Company even gave it a great writeup in a comparison of different ereaders, even if the \$650 price seemed a bit high. And *Fast Company's* writeup seemed to be of a shipping product.

Not so fast. In August 2010, Plastic Logic announced that it was focusing on a second-generation reader. In other words, the QUE that

had never shipped was already abandoned. Did it ever exist outside of prototypes? Only Plastic Logic knows. This isn't a Betamax situation. It's worse. Betamax shipped before VHS and continued for a decade (much longer in professional circles).

It's a Slate! It's an Ereader!

It's the \$500 Entourage Edge—which, according to an August 2010 *PC World* review—combines an oversize (9.7") touch E-ink screen with, on a hinge, a 10.1" touchscreen LCD. According to the review, it's basically a "large smartphone" and really too bulky for most uses. The review is three of five stars: Good but far from great.

Convergent vs. Dedicated

The Entourage is a strange hybrid convergence device—and Steven Harris had a pretty good take on one of those silly "versus" situations in this October 18, 2009 post at *Collections 2.0*.

Convergent vs dedicated is an endless question when we talk about digital devices. Specialization or jack-of-all-trades. Roy Tennant said recently that the single-purpose e-book reader was "dead, dead, dead." Convergent devices are often seen as "killers" of the specialized. But over the past 10 years I've found that not to be the case.

Harris is decidedly technophilic—he first started shopping for a PDA in 1999 and owned two generations of Compaq's iPAQ. (Remember Compaq's iPAQ?) He's *looked* for a do-everything machine—and thought he had one in a Treo. But, as he found, the do-everything device usually doesn't do everything very well. The Treo didn't have enough screen space for easy reading and didn't take very good photos. He wound up buying two digital cameras, a point-and-shoot and a DSLR.

I think cameras are a good example of how the do-everything device doesn't always win. Virtually all cellphones now days have a built-in camera. Yet people continue to buy single-purpose digital cameras. That is because they have functions and features that are difficult to cram into the small space of an all-in-one device. And people sometimes want to take a picture that is better than the fog and blur of a cameraphone photo. Performance matters. Video cameras like the Flip also continue to be successful despite the ability of many phones to do video. Televisions are another single-purpose device that continue to sell, even though people can watch TV on their computer. A big television screen is better.

There's more to this pre-iPad discussion (he notes the likelihood of an Apple tablet computer). The iPad was supposed to be an instant KindleKiller, an inevitability that hasn't quite worked out so far. He doesn't note that feature phones continue to outsell smartphones by a considerable margin, but he does note that some people still buy phones that just make phone calls.

It isn't and shouldn't be either-or, which makes particularly silly the notion (I've seen advanced by some gurus) that all devices inevitably become full-fledged multipurpose computers. Why should they?

Just looking at the American market, there are doubtless tens of millions of people who would never buy a camera but might take an occasional snapshot with a cell phone (smart or otherwise) and be happy with the results—but also tens of millions for whom a separate camera is precisely the right device. The same with iPads and Kindles and, well, you name it. Some people happily give up performance for convergence (or choose convergence because it's The Right Thing To Do); others pick and choose, preferring dedicated devices for some things, multipurpose elsewhere. One size never really did fit all, and that's even truer for technology than for clothing.

Blu-ray in Libraries

Guess what? Blu-ray didn't die; in fact, it's being adopted at a faster rate than DVDs were, relative to the introduction of the medium. With falling prices, an increasing tendency to bundle Blu-ray plus DVD plus a version you can use on a portable player into a single box that's a few bucks more than a DVD and the fact that Blu-ray players now cost \$120 or less...well, it's not surprising that the supermarket DVD racks around here devote about one-third of the space to Blu-ray. They're not doing that because nobody wants the discs.

Jeff T. Dick has an interesting article at *Library Journal*, dated November 15, 2009: "Bracing for Blu-ray." It includes a survey of some public and academic libraries—and even in April 2009, 11% of academic and 12% of public libraries were circulating Blu-ray Discs. I'd guess the rate is considerably higher now, and it probably should be.

Streaming isn't going to replace Blu-ray any time soon, not for patrons who appreciate the difference in visual quality between DVD and Blu-ray.

The infrastructure isn't there for mass adoption of streaming at that rate. Almost nobody has the required broadband (at least 20 megabits per second, preferably 30). I have yet to see an honest review that showed even the best streams as being close to Blu-ray quality. For a community-oriented library to say "Screw Blu-ray, everybody's going to stream" is on a par with saying "We're not buying any more print books, since everybody's switching to ebooks." Not true, and a dangerous attitude.

Maybe this is the right place to say a few words about Grady Hendrix' "Boxed In," posted at *Slate* on December 1, 2009, with the page title "Don't give DVD box sets as gifts" (*Slate* has a bizarre habit of using different page names and titles for stories) and subtitle "Giving someone a TV series on DVD is like giving them a life sentence." I'm not sure whether the article's a joke or not. It seems to imply that having a boxed set of a series *requires* you to engage in marathon viewing sessions. Which is...well, maybe the article's a joke. I agree with the statement "Television episodes were never meant to be viewed in rapid-fire order," and that's why we don't watch series on DVD that way (and don't recommend it). It's *really easy* to put a big Post-it® note on the box and check off episodes as you go, say one episode a week (our usual practice), with other stuff in between.

The piece also allows Hendrix to turn up his nose at TV series that don't meet his critical approval. "Is the arrival of *Jake and the Fat Man* on DVD a sign that perhaps we've overpreserved? Isn't a 42-disc set of *Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman* taking things just a bit too far?" Not if you happen to love those series (I'm not among that company). And since *nobody's forcing Hendrix to watch them*, he should butt out. If the article's a joke, it's strangely deficient in humor; if it's not, it's strangely deficient in sense.

Windows 7 on a 1999 PC?

Yep. A "Geektech" piece in the November 2010 *PC World* notes that they were going through their warehouse and spotted a "My Favorite PC" budget PC dating from January 1999—noting that this was a *budget* PC way back then. The piece doesn't mention the CPU name, but it's a 400MHz unit; given the date, it's likely that it was a Pentium-II or Pentium-III. Oh, they had to do a couple of upgrades, swapping out 32MB of RAM for 512MB and

junking the 512MB hard disk (yes, that's right, 512 megabytes) for a 160GB drive. But after that, they plugged it in, updated the BIOS, and installed Windows 7 Starter.

And it runs. Not real rapidly—"the 400MHz processor spent days chugging through Firefox and Microsoft Office tests that take 6 to 8 hours on a new budget PC"—but *it ran*. It completed WorldBench 6, earning a 5. (A typical 2010 budget desktop scores around 100.) This is on an 11-year-old CPU with half a gig of RAM.

My Favorite PC? That was the brand name. No, I haven't either.

Chrome OS

Since the previous item discusses an operating system indirectly, this may be the place to mention Chrome OS—or at least some posts about it from more than a year ago. Start with a November 10, 2009 story by Jon Stokes at *ars technica*, "Chrome OS: Internet failing at PC > PC failing at Internet." That came a day after Google's big press event where it introduced Chrome OS. The piece is typical of *ars technica* at its best, describing the OS carefully and clearly (it may be open sourced, but it "will support only a limited number of Google-blessed devices and peripherals"). It says a Chrome OS device will be "closer in many ways to a smartphone than...to a netbook." All user data lives in the cloud (to Stokes, the lack of a file system is a plus). Stokes wonders whether a device with even less capability than a netbook has much future—and notes that the key indicator isn't the burgeoning sales of netbooks but whether those sales are for cloud devices or cheap Windows devices. (With the low requirements and apparent success of Windows 7 Starter, that's probably a more significant question now than it was in November 2009.) As I read the conclusion, Stokes seems to be saying that The Future is The Cloud, giving Chrome OS a real shot.

A somewhat less favorable look came on November 20 from *InfoWorld*: Randall C. Kennedy's "Why Chrome OS will fail—big time." Kennedy doesn't much care for Linux (the foundation for Chrome OS), calling it "a minefield of buggy code and half-baked driver implementations." He's not wild about using a browser as *the* user interface. Mostly, though, he regards it as inflexible and says, "The world won't buy an inflexible OS." He doesn't

think most users are ready to compute *entirely* in the cloud. (The first comment promises \$50 tablets by the end of 2011 and calls Kennedy "a computing dinosaur and completely out of touch." That set the tone for the rest of the comments, many of which flatly state that Kennedy is a paid shill for Microsoft.)

Know who gets Chrome OS in one? Phil Bradley. His November 22, 2009 post embeds a three-minute video explaining Chrome OS but also has one paragraph of text, of which the key portion is this: "**Google ChromeOS turns your computer into a dumb terminal.** That's not necessarily a bad thing, but that's essentially what's happening."

How has Chrome OS done since then? A year after the *full* press event (the original announcement came in July 2009), there must be a bunch of Chrome OS tablets, right? Cue *Wikipedia*, which as of December 10, 2009 calls Chrome OS "a *forthcoming* Linux-based, open source operating system..." [Emphasis added.] The article says the launch date has slipped to "by some reports, mid-2011." A December 7, 2010 *ars technica* piece by Ryan Paul describes a same-day Google press briefing demonstrating Chrome OS—but seeming to conflate it with the Chrome browser. Google is passing out a few "unbranded test units" to show what Chrome OS devices can do. It's fair to say Paul isn't absolutely convinced: "it's difficult to see the appeal of Chrome OS compared to simply using the Chrome browser on top of Ubuntu, for example, which would give users the added advantages of a native computing environment."

...and Speaking of Windows 7

Windows 7 was introduced in October 2009. After two months on the market, it already had almost 6% market share (more than Mac OS X), a level that Vista hadn't reached after five months. According to NetMarketShare, as of December 10, 2010 Windows 7 has passed Vista and has about 20% of the market to Vista's 12.6%. XP still leads with nearly 58%; Mac OS X, all versions, comes to 5%—and, if you're wondering, Linux isn't quite 1%.

The Trouble with DVRs

Now that we finally have a superb HDTV at home, I'd *love* to have a digital video recorder. We don't watch a lot of broadcast TV—eight shows or 7.5 hours a week when everything's on—but we care

about what we watch and hate to miss episodes. Our S-VHS VCR, while it faithfully records analog TV with no apparent loss of video quality, isn't up to high-def standards. Nor does it claim to be. (To my pleasant surprise, the video passthrough on coax in and out *is* up to high-def standards: It passes the full bandwidth with no degradation.)

So what's the problem? I'm not wild about TiVo's monthly program fee, but could handle that. But there's this—something I suspected that's affirmed in an October 2010 *PC World* article where the writer's discussing "vampire power" (or "parasitic power"), power used by devices that appear to be off. He notes that his DVR "burns a frightening 53 watts in standby"—and DVRs *must* be left in standby or on all the time to perform properly. For us, that would mean 464 kilowatt-hours a year or about 39 per month, assuming that it's consumption when "on" is about the same (as it probably is). That would be *significantly* more than a 10% increase in our entire household electrical usage...for a device we'd probably need one or two hours a month. I'm also not wild about having a hard disk running 24 hours a day, but that's secondary.

Build a DVR for people who don't watch a lot of TV—one that turns itself on once a day to download programming updates and is otherwise only on if you schedule a program. Standby shouldn't be more than half a watt. I'd be interested. Otherwise, not so much.

Wisdom Audio Sage L100i

This speaker system, reviewed in the October 2010 *Home Theater*, takes in-wall speakers to what might be a logical extreme if you don't have the money or space to build a dedicated home cinema room. The front speakers are 52" tall and 8" wide but less than 4" deep and designed for in-wall installation—did I mention that there are *two* of these tall, slender panels for each channel? (One has a 48" planar magnetic speaker, the other has eight 6" woofers.) There's an in-wall center speaker, the same dimensions but apparently *three* enclosures (with twice as many woofers), a subwoofer, and surround speakers similar to the front speakers but with a single 80"-tall enclosure and only four of those 6" woofers. And the amplifiers and controllers you need for this complex set of speakers: the woofers and planar tweeters require separate amplification.

They apparently sound great, and other than the surround speakers and subwoofer, they can be nearly invisible. The reviewer calls the sound "jaw-dropping." There are no measurements, unusual for speaker reviews in this magazine, so you must take it on faith. There is one issue. The set costs a trifling \$88,500 (not including surround processor, sources, video components, screen and installation). These being speakers, I am *not* prepared to say they're obviously overpriced...particularly given the problems involved in making high quality speakers disappear. I'll never own speakers like these, but for some folks they may be a bargain.

Editors' Choices and Roundups

The July 2010 *PC World* looks at a *lot* of netbooks and finds five winners, depending on your needs. Lenovo's \$369 IdeaPad S10-3 gets honors for best design, although it's a little pricey for what you get. Gateway's \$350 LT2118u has the best battery life—11 hours 17 minutes in the magazine's tests. If you're on a budget, the \$299 Asus Eee PC 1001P-MU17 is a winner, mostly for its "Express Gate" instant-on OS. HP's \$729 Mini 5102 is called best for business, but to my mind, \$729 takes it out of the netbook category. The \$480 Asus Eee PC 1201N is described as best for entertainment—but with a 12" screen and near-\$500 price, I also wonder whether it's really a netbook. Notably, it's also 3.2 pounds (the others range from 2.6 to 2.8 pounds).

A May 2010 *PC World* roundup of desktop PCs gives the highest rating to the \$4,199 CyberPower Black Pearl—but the Best Buy goes to HP's \$1,434 Pavilion HPE-170t. Based on the "good" graphics rating and "fair" overall design rating for the HP, I'm not so sure.

What's the status of security suites? According to *PC World* as of May 2010, the two "superior" suites are Norton Internet Security 2010 and Kaspersky Internet Security 2010—but the Best Buy goes to a lower-rated suite, PC Tools Internet Security 2010. PC Tools is \$50/year for three computers; Norton—the top rating—is \$70.

A September 2010 *PC World* article claims to "reveal which browser is the fastest, the safest, and the most powerful tool for the Web." It's an odd set of comparisons—one with some built-in biases (e.g., Firefox's interface "feels dated" compared to competitors). The article says Google Chrome has the best user interface and best security, Firefox

has the best extensions, and Chrome is fastest and has the best JavaScript handling. Guess which one they recommend? I should note that speed differences between Chrome 5, IE 8, Firefox 3.6 and Safari 5 were all minor—except that IE is slow on JavaScript. A sidebar about HTML5 says it’s “the future of the web” but also says the spec won’t be finalized for “another 12 years or so.” *Twelve years?*

Over on the audio side, the October 2010 *Sound+Vision* reviews four soundbar systems with distinctly different characteristics and prices. At the low end, Boston Acoustics’ TVee Model 20 costs a mere \$300, which gets you a two-channel powered soundbar and a powered wireless subwoofer. It appears to offer pretty good performance for the price. Aperion Audio’s SLIMstage 30 soundbar is designed to simulate surround sound, with six speakers to handle four channels (plus a subwoofer) and its own surround decoding and surround synthesis. It also includes a headphone output jack, which may be more useful for some of us than the reviewer believes. The price? \$800. KEF’s HTF8003 soundbar had three front channels but *no amplifier*, so you need a receiver or amplifier as well. The soundbar alone costs \$800, but the provided subwoofer is another \$1,250. Finally, Yamaha’s YSP-4100/YST-SW15 combo uses 40 little tweeters (and two midrange drivers) to simulate surround sound; it runs a cool \$2,200 total. If size is an issue, *any* of these will fit beneath most big-screen TVs: The two pricey ones are 37 to 40” wide, while the two less expensive units are 31” wide.

Another *PC World* “best for this kind of user” roundup appears in the November 2010 issue, this time reviewing one-piece PCs, of which there are many more than there used to be. The choices? For your home office, the \$1,100 Lenovo ThinkCenter M90z (Core i5 CPU, 4GB RAM, 500GB disk, 23” display). For your living room, HP’s \$1,800 TouchSmart 600 Quad (Core i7, 6GB RAM, 1TB hard disk, Blu-ray, 23” display). In the kitchen, HP’s \$780 All-in-One 200-5020 (Pentium Dual Core, 4GB RAM, 500GB disk, 21.5” display). Your “cash-strapped student” can get by with Acer’s \$1,000 AZ5700-U2112 (Core i5, 4GB RAM, 1TB hard disk, 23” screen)—but your “gaming tween” deserves the \$1,400 Lenovo IdeaCentre 8500 (Core 2 Quad, 4GB RAM, 1TB disc, Blu-ray, nVidia GeForce GTS 250M graphics...and, oddly, no indication of the size of the 1920x1080 display). What about iMac? With no Blu-ray, TV

tuner, HDMI or eSata, it’s too pricey and underconfigured for the discussion, although it is fast and gorgeous “if you’re a fan of brushed metal.”

The November 2010 *Sound+Vision* reviews three 3D Blu-ray players, all costing \$250. All three—from LG, Panasonic and Sony—do a great job with Blu-ray, but differ in other areas. LG’s BX580 includes wifi and streams lots of things but doesn’t do a great job upscaling regular DVD. Panasonic’s DMP-BDT100 is WiFi-ready (add a \$70 or so adapter to make it work) and has slightly fewer streaming options, but it does a great job of upconversion, has good picture enhancement and works rapidly. Finally, Sony’s BDP-S770 has wifi and loads of streaming, and adds SACD support—but it’s not quite as good with DVDs as the Panasonic.

The Liblog Landscape 2007-2010

3. How, Where and When

In this chapter we consider six aspects of liblogs:

- How they’re created (the blogging software used)
- Where they’re written (country of origin)
- How visible they are (Google Page Rank)
- When they began
- How long they’ve lasted
- Currency—a timed snapshot of freshness of posts.

How: Liblog Software

In 2008, 511 of 607 blogs studied used blogging software from one of five major sources. That year, WordPress was used by *slightly* more bloggers than Blogger, with those two far ahead of any others.

In 2009, WordPress had moved ahead, with 47% of the 521 liblogs as compared to just under 37% for Blogger and 9% for the next highest (Six Apart products, namely TypePad and Movable-Type). Earlier in 2009, another blogger checked blog software usage for a different universe of liblogs and concluded that Blogger was by far the platform of choice for the general population, followed distantly by WordPress and even more distantly by Typepad. Indeed, those results showed Blogger with more than twice as many blogs as WordPress.

I questioned the results in a rather ungracious comment. I’ve since apologized for the way I han-

dled it—but not for questioning an assertion that, in essence, Blogger is twice as popular as WordPress among libloggers.

This broader survey yields *much* more interesting results—specifically because it clarifies to what extent the results depend on the question being asked.

The Total Universe: It's a Tie

Table 3.1 shows the blogging software used for all liblogs in this year's study. "Six Apart" combines TypePad and MovableType and "Other" includes other known packages and handcrafted blogs.

Software	Blogs	Percent
Blogger	572	43.9%
Drupal	12	0.9%
LiveJournal	22	1.7%
Posterous	3	0.2%
Six Apart	75	5.8%
Tumblr	7	0.5%
WordPress	560	42.9%
Other	53	4.1%
Total	1,304	

Table 3.1: Blogging software for all liblogs

How can it be the case that WordPress was showing a substantial lead over Blogger in 2009, just shy of a majority of all blogs, when the two are essentially tied in 2010 (with Blogger 1% ahead)?

There are at least two good answers to be found by looking at types and groups.

Types: Book Bloggers Favor Blogger, Techies WordPress

Software	Blogs	Percent
Blogger	61	53.0%
Drupal	1	0.9%
LiveJournal	2	1.7%
Posterous	1	0.9%
Six Apart	5	4.3%
Tumblr	2	1.7%
WordPress	41	35.7%
Other	2	1.7%
Total	115	

Table 3.2: Blogging software for book blogs

Table 3.2 shows part of the answer: Most book (and other review) blogs use Blogger. Quite a few book blogs use fairly fancy Blogger templates—including one that inserts a strict copyright claim and warning about plagiarism, interesting in a blog that (in

earlier times) had included the full lyrics of a popular song without indication of permission.

Technology-oriented bloggers favor WordPress—a little more than book bloggers favor Blogger and for a much larger set of blogs.

Software	Blogs	Percent
Blogger	128	31.6%
Drupal	8	2.0%
LiveJournal	2	0.5%
Posterous	1	0.2%
Six Apart	23	5.7%
Tumblr	2	0.5%
WordPress	226	55.8%
Other	15	3.7%
Total	405	

Table 3.3: Blogging software for technology blogs

For other blogs, Blogger is ahead of WordPress (48.9% to 37.4%). In all cases, Six Apart (TypePad and MovableType) is a distant third, with other platforms even less visible. Note that the newish platforms Posterous and Tumblr have yet to make significant inroads among liblogs.

Groups: Core Blogs Favor WordPress

Software	Blogs	Percent
Blogger	150	33.9%
Drupal	5	1.1%
LiveJournal	5	1.1%
Posterous	1	0.2%
Six Apart	34	7.7%
Tumblr	0	0.0%
WordPress	232	52.4%
Other	16	3.6%
Total	443	

Table 3.4: Blogging software for Group 1 (Core) blogs

Although not quite as striking as the figures for technology liblogs, the breakdown for core blogs (in Table 3.4 above) is distinct, and shows a shift toward WordPress from other platforms. A clear majority of all core blogs use WordPress; Blogger is a fairly distant second.

Now consider the other extreme—Group 4, blogs that are moribund or defunct. As shown in Table 3.5, nearly 60% of those blogs used Blogger, while just over a quarter used WordPress.

Software	Blogs	Percent
Blogger	171	59.0%
Drupal	1	0.3%

LiveJournal	8	2.8%
Posterous	0	0.0%
Six Apart	19	6.6%
Tumblr	0	0.0%
WordPress	76	26.2%
Other	15	5.2%
Total	290	

Table 3.5: Blogging software for Group 4 (Moribund) blogs

Other groups are somewhere in the middle—with Blogger leading WordPress slightly in Group 2, WordPress leading Blogger in Group 3. Taking all groups *except* Group 4, WordPress leads with just under 48% (but not quite a majority), while Blogger follows with just under 40%. In every group and type, it's a two-horse race: no other software accounts for even 10% of blogs.

Where: Liblogs by Country

I was able to determine the country in which the blogger(s) resided (not necessarily the country of citizenship) for 1,216 of the 1,304 blogs. Table 3.6 shows this information in descending order by number of blogs.

Country	Blogs
United States	880
United Kingdom	109
Canada	91
Australia	79
Netherlands	6
New Zealand	6
Philippines	5
India	4
Iran	4
Italy	3
Norway	3
Singapore	3
Wales	3
China	2
Ireland	2
Scotland	2
Sweden	2
Thailand	2
Antigua	1
Austria	1
Denmark	1
Egypt	1
Fiji	1
France	1

Germany	1
Mexico	1
Portugal	1
Spain	1

Table 3.6. Liblogs by country

Given that this study is limited to English-language liblogs, the results are scarcely surprising—that is, 97% or all but 32 of the blogs come from either the primary English-speaking nations or nations where English is an official language (Singapore, Philippines, Fiji, Hong Kong) or the dominant language (Antigua).

I used Scotland or Wales only when that was clear from the blogger's self-identification. Chances are, more of the blogs labeled United Kingdom come from Scotland and Wales.

Adjusted for population within the top five, Australia libloggers are very active (3.5 blogs per million people), with the United States and Canada roughly tied for second (2.8 and 2.7 blogs per million respectively)—and the United Kingdom (including Scotland and Wales) and New Zealand somewhat behind (1.8 and 1.4 blogs per million). As a liblog reader, I know Australian librarians are unusually active bloggers.

A Few of the Others

What of the 32 blogs that come from countries where English is not an official (or the dominant) language and that aren't moribund? Several are by English-speaking librarians teaching or working abroad. Notes on most of the others:

Petter Næss has been writing *Knowbodies* since 2003, originating in Denmark but with a broad international set of “news about websites, technology, resources, applications, trends and all manner of information that might be of interest to librarians and other information seekers.”

From France we get *Science Intelligence and InfoPros*, from a “Librarian at a big pharmaceutical company.” The relatively young blog includes selective, thoughtful commentaries by “hbasset” on items related to science and librarianship.

Chetan Hegde M writes *LISMysore* from Mysore, India—not a prolific blog but one with interesting posts. In New Delhi, Sukdhev Singh writes *Sukdhev in Web Land*, another blog that's been around since 2005.

Iran appears to have a very active liblogging community, but with a lot of appearances and dis-

appearances. Two Iranian blogs with many or most posts in English are still active, both since 2005: Yazdan Mansourian's *The Invisible Web Weblog* and Ehsan Mohammadi's *Virtual Ehsan Real Blog*.

I love the title of Mexico's sole English-language liblog (of which I'm aware): *Stupendous Amazing Library*. It's by Alejandro Garza at Monterrey Tech, it's been around since 2007, and it's what the banner says: "Library technical stuff, focused on Drupal, search, metasearch and the user experience."

Half a dozen English liblogs come from the Netherlands. Lukas Koster writes *Common-Place.Net* about "Library 2.0 and beyond." *DigiCMB* ("The Web, Research, Virtual and Social Networks in Health and Medicine") comes from "The 'Infectious' Librarian," Guus van den Brekel. Another medical library blog exploring the "web 2.0 world," *Laika's MedLibLog*, comes from "Laika Spoetnik," a pseudonym for someone named Jacqueline. "Driek" at the University of Amsterdam has been writing *Library spring* "on innovation for academic research libraries" since 2006 and Wouter Gerritsma has produced *WoW! Wouter on the Web* since 2007—but included quite a few English posts in his older blog. Then there's *obnoxious librarian from hades*: Dennie Heye, who's turned three years of posts into a self-published book (or "blook").

From Norway, Thomas Brevik's *Librarian 1.5*, around since January 2006, gives its coverage as "Library 2.0 from a Scandinavian perspective." *Plinius*, around since 2005, appears in two versions—one Norwegian, one English.

Mónica Mendes Pinheiro in Portugal has been writing the wide-ranging *Monica's jeans* since 2003, with some posts in Portuguese, many in English and some a mix of the two.

Finally, there are two from Sweden. Åke Nygren's *bibl.se*, described as "digital library bubbles," just moved to Posterous (at bibl.posterous.com). Lars Iselid, Librarian at the Medical Library, Umeå University Library, Sweden, has been writing *Nowhere North* since September 2006, covering "Internet, search engines, information and library science (LIS), travellings, conferences, open source and free software (FOSS) etc."

Visibility: Google Page Rank

I use Google Page Rank (GPR) as a crude indicator of blog visibility with misgivings. It is unquestionably crude: There are only 11 possible values and no

liblog has any of the three highest values. Older blogs generally do better because GPR values links and links accumulate over age. It can be confounded by several things, including changing platform or URL. But it's the only readily available measure I can find, and—with a few notable exceptions—it seems to be a reasonably good crude measure.

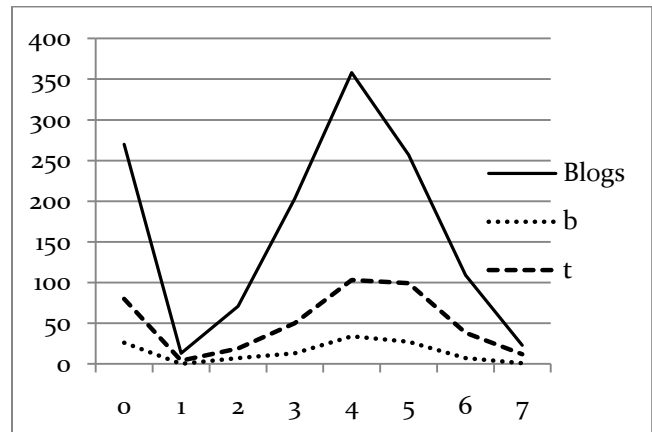


Figure 3.1: GPR for all blogs, book blogs and tech blogs

Figure 3.1 shows GPR counts for all liblogs and for bookblogs (b) and tech blogs (t). It's worth noting that, while the overall population has a sharp spike at GPR4, with somewhat lower values at 2 and 5, the book/review blogs have a strong showing at 5—and there are almost as many tech blogs with GPR5 as with GPR4 (99 and 103 respectively). Do note that the solid line includes blogs in the other two lines.

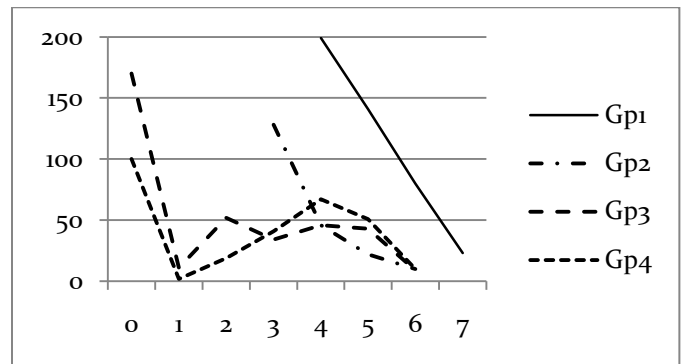


Figure 3.2: GPR for blogs by group

Figure 3.2 is mostly interesting to compare groups 3 and 4, where any GPR value is possible. By definition, Group 1 blogs start at GPR4 and Group 2 blogs start at GPR3—with most of them having that value. Possibly noteworthy: All of the most visible blogs (GPR7) are in Group 1, which means they're all still fairly active—as are roughly three-quarters of GPR6 blogs.

When: Liblogs by Date of Origin

The broader universe of liblogs this time around shows a sharply different pattern by date of origin than earlier studies.

Year	Blogs	Percent
1998	1	0.1%
1999	2	0.2%
2000	4	0.3%
2001	12	0.9%
2002	29	2.2%
2003	91	7.0%
2004	124	9.5%
2005	237	18.2%
2006	224	17.2%
2007	263	20.2%
2008	165	12.7%
2009	117	9.0%
2010	35	2.7%

Table 3.7: Blogs by Starting Year

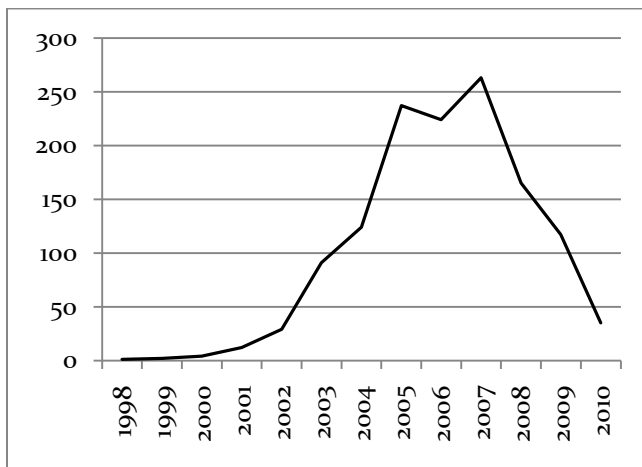


Figure 3.3: Blogs by starting year

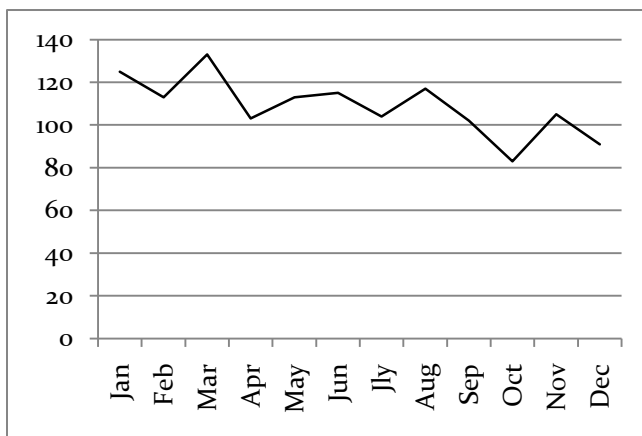


Figure 3.4: Blogs by starting month

Because I wanted to track longevity (see below), I recorded the month of origin separately from the year. You may find Figure 3.4 meaningful, or you may not. “Library folks are less likely to start blogs late in the year”—that’s what I come up with.

Pioneering Blogs

Here’s a list of the oldest blogs—not the oldest quintile (that would include all blogs started in 2004 or before) but roughly the oldest tenth, those started in 2003 or before. In some cases these blogs began with different names but have continuity of archives. Blogs that currently appear to be moribund or defunct (having had no posts between June 1, 2009 and May 31, 2010) appear in italics.

Blog	Month
1998	
ResearchBuzz	August
1999	
oss4lib	February
librarian.net	April
2000	
Search Engine Showdown Blog	July
<i>Info Career Trends</i>	September
Library Banter	November
Librarisaurus Rex	December
2001	
<i>LibraryPlanet.com</i>	January
ResourceShelf	January
The Handheld Librarian	January
mazar.ca	March
Scholarly Electronic Publishing Weblog	June
AnthoBLOGy	July
<i>infolibre</i>	September
the cynic librarian	September
librarygeek	October
The Rabid Librarian's Ravings in the Wind	October
<i>Kegliography</i>	December
rawbrick.net	December
2002	
The Shifted Librarian	January
EngLib	February
BookBitchBlog	March
Catalogablog	March
ASC Online	April
Family Man Librarian	April
MaisonBisson.com	April
42short	May
Open Access News	May
eclectic librarian	June
<i>Leah's Law Library Weblog</i>	June

Old Fox's KM blotter June
 Raspoird Maunderings June
Lady Crumpet's Armoire July
 beSpecific August
Conan the Librarian August
 Confessions of a Bibliovore August
 etc. August
 The Aardvark Speaks August
 frontier librarian September
Saving the world daily through information ... September
 the pod bay door September
 Confessions of a Science Librarian October
Liberry Blooze October
Loopy Librarian October
 mamamusings October
 DrWeb's Domain December
Observations from the front line December
 Union Librarian December

2003

At Home He's a Tourist January
 Book Kitten January
Diary of a Wandering Cataloger January
 Library Link of the Day January
 Library Stuff January
 Sites and Soundbytes January
 Archivalia February
 capital city desk February
 Citegeist February
 Pattern Recognition February
 Peter Scott's Library Blog February
 Redhaired Librarian February
 The Misadventures of Super_Librarian February
 The world is my dinosaur February
 AFPL Watch March
Open Stacks March
SciTech Library Question March
 TangognaT March
The Laughing Librarian March

Creative Librarian April
 infosophy April
 j's scratchpad April
 Librarian Avengers April
 Libraryman April
 The Invisible Library April
The Playful Antiquarian April
Threnody for the Public Domain April
 Virtual Dave...Real Blog April
 Attempting Elegance May
 explodedlibrary.info May
JasonUnbound May
 Library Monk May
Ref Grunt May
Adventures of an InfoMage in Training June
 DIY Librarian June

Epistemographer June
 Librarian June
 Lupe's journal June

Fairly Used July
 Free Range Librarian July
 Monica's jeans July
 NAMA-RUPA July
 The Days & Nights of the Lipstick Librarian! July
 The Information Literacy Land of Confusion July
 Tiny Little Librarian July
 Travelin' Librarian July
 zydeco fish July
 Dirty Librarian August
 Kids Lit August
Legal References August
Librarian's Rant August
 Public Libraries: fighting cynicism August
tblog - fling fling! August
The Nonny Librarians August
 Tillabooks: Will's Book Blog August
Young Librarian August
 blogwithoutalibrary.net September
 David Lee King September
 Hip Librarians Book Blog September
 Information Takes Over September
 LibrariAnne September
Library Despot 3.0 September

Knowbodies October
 LawLibTech October
libertarian Librarian October
 Library Chronicles October
 Lorcan Dempsey's weblog October
On Christina's Radar October
 Osten Ard October
 Overdue Ideas October
 The Hot Librarian October
 The In Season Christian Librarian October
The InfoMan's Blog October
The Well Dressed Librarian October
 Beyond the Job November
 Books to curl up with: a librarian's musings ... November
 Borderland Tales November
 Confessions of a Mad Librarian November
 LibrarianActivist.org November
Library Stories: Libraries & Librarians
in the News November
The Illustrated Librarian November
 The Librarydude! November
 The Loud Librarian November
 User Education Resources for Librarians .. November
 Dispatches from a Public Librarian December
Elementary School Blog December
 Legal Marketing December

Librarian Way.....December
 Open Reading FrameDecember
 Professional-Lurker: Comments by an academic
 in cyberspace.....December

Longevity

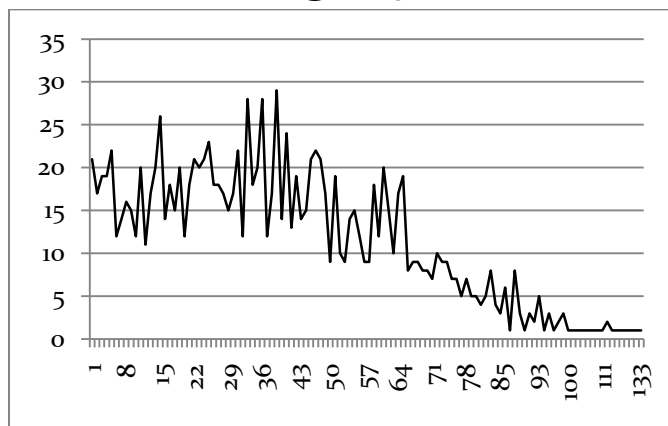


Figure 3.5: Blog longevity by months

I tracked the number of months between the first post in each blog and the last post before June 1, 2010. The average and median are surprisingly close in this case: 39.2 months on average, 36 months as the median. Figure 3.5 shows blog longevity by months.

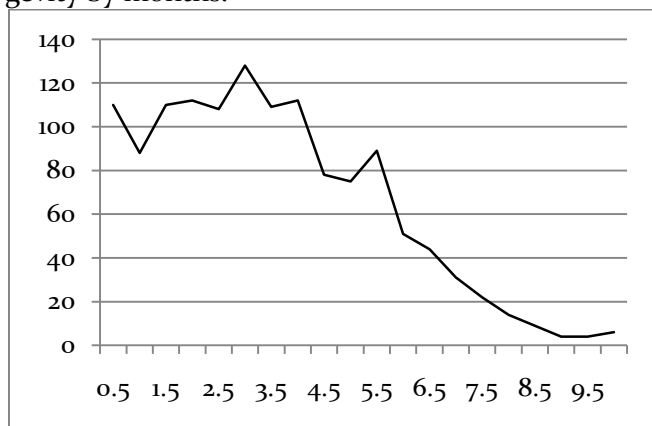


Figure 3.6: Blog longevity by years

Figure 3.6, which breaks longevity down into half-years, is easier to read—but I’m not sure how much either figure means. A blog that began in January 2008 can’t have lasted more than 29 months by May 2010 (for example).

On the other hand, there are distinct differences between groups of blogs in terms of longevity. Core blogs (group 1) average 51 months with a median of 48 months. Group 2 blogs average 42 months with a median of 41 months. Group 3 blogs average 34 months with a median of 33 months—and group 4 blogs, blogs that are defunct or mori-

bund, average 24 months with a median of 19 months. Look at the two extremes: In essence, core blogs that are still active have been around about twice as long as blogs that are abandoned. (There are no significant longevity differences between book/review, technology and other blogs.)

	Blogs	High	Low	Median	Moribund
All	1,304	142	1	36	22%
Q1	254	142	62	73	7%
Q2	266	61	44	51	11%
Q3	256	43	31	36	16%
Q4	267	30	16	24	28%
Q5	261	15	1	8	48%

Table 3.8: Longevity quintiles

Table 3.8 breaks blog longevity down by quintiles—with slightly varying sizes to break at whole numbers. Since this is the first quintile table (of many), let’s break it down a little—and note what may be the most interesting column, that is, what percentage of blogs in the quintile is in Group 4 (moribund or defunct as of May 31, 2010).

- The fifth of blogs that have been around the longest (from first post to most recent prior to June 2010) have been running from just over five years to more than 11 years, with a median of just over six years. Only 7% of these blogs are moribund.
- Blogs in the second quintile—above average but not in the top fifth—have been around from under four years to just over five, with a median of four years three months. 11% of these blogs are moribund, half the overall average.
- Blogs in the third quintile—“roughly average”—have been around from roughly 2.5 to roughly 3.5 years, with a median of three years. One-sixth of these blogs are apparently moribund, slightly below the overall average.
- For the fourth quintile, longevity ranges from one year four months to 2.5 years, with a median of two years—and more than a quarter of these blogs are moribund.
- Blogs with the shortest lifespan range from a single month to 1.25 years, with a median of just eight months—and nearly half of these blogs are moribund.

There’s a touch of obviousness about the overall conclusion here: Blogs tend to die young.

Blogs with the most longevity (that began in 2004 or later)

This list, arranged by decreasing longevity, shows those blogs in the first quintile that are *not* also pioneers—that is, those that began in 2004 and later.

Blog	Months
Connie Crosby	78
A Canuck Librarian	77
derivative work	77
GoddessLibrarian	77
Incoherent Scribblings	77
Informationoverlord	77
A Library Writer's Blog	76
Christina's LIS Rant	76
Daveman's Blog	76
Foxylibrarian.com	76
Loomware - Crafting New Libraries	76
ADHD Librarian	75
Bibliotherapy for obsessive/compulsive Readers	75
Fiddling Librarian 3.0	75
Library Web Chic	75
Tame the Web	75
walking paper	75
Carolyn's pages of interest	74
CogSci Librarian	74
Dojo of the Library Ninja	74
HappyGeek's CodeX	74
LibraryLaw Blog	74
Princess Cosine, the cunning librarian	74
The Liminal Librarian	74
It's all good	73
LibraryBytes	73
librarygrrrl.net	73
Matthew 2.0	73
Of Life, Education, E-bay, Travel & Books	73
The Distant Librarian	73
bookshelves of doom	72
Booktalks--Quick and Simple blog	72
Digital Reference	72
Duck Duck Book	72
Grumpator	72
Rambling Librarian :: Incidental Thoughts of a Singapore Librarian	72
Revelations	72
The Krafty Librarian	72
Txt-based Blogging	72

Bubble Room	71
From a KC Librarian	71
Killin' time being lazy	71
Miss Information	71
Radical Reference	71
Ravings of a Lunatic Librarian	71
Venn Librarian	71
Arriving Somewhere	70
Blog on the Side - Darlene Fichter	70
Digitization 101	70
Frequently Answered Questions	70
Larocque and Roll	70
Panlibus	70
The Real Paul Jones	70
Bad Librarianship Now!	69
Lost in the StuporMarket	69
Pop Goes the Library	69
Rachel Vacek	69
scribble scribble scribble	69
Shelly's Book Shelf	69
Wanderings of an online librarian	69
Amusing Things that Patrons Do and Say in the Library Environment	68
Hermes' Neuticles	68
Librarian In Black	68
Outsidecat	68
Professional Notes	68
The Goddess of YA Literature	68
The Society for Librarians Who Say...	68
A LIBRARIAN AT THE KITCHEN TABLE	67
A Wandering Eyre	67
ebyblog	67
Free Government Information (FGI)	67
Information Wants To Be Free	67
PomeRantz	67
T. Scott	67
Vancouver Law Librarian Blog	67
Biblio File	66
DigiCMB	66
Hidden Peanuts	66
Library Technology in Texas	66
Ramblings on Librarianship, Technology, and Academia	66
The Life of Books	66
A Librarian's Guide to Etiquette	65
Baby Boomer Librarian	65
Fig Newtons and Scotch	65
Law Librarian Blog	65
Librarian 1.5	65

Library Voice	65
LibraryTavern.....	65
Marcus' World.....	65
Michael Zimmer.org.....	65
OA Librarian	65
Online Insider	65
PLA Blog	65
Recreational Reading	65
reeling and writhing	65
The Centered Librarian.....	65
The Imaginary Journal of Poetic Economics.....	65
copy this blog.....	64
Depraved Librarian.....	64
digitizationblog	64
Dilettante's Ball.....	64
Feistylibrarian	64
Filipino Librarian.....	64
garish & tweed	64
habitually probing generalist.....	64
Innovate.....	64
Inquiring Librarian.....	64
Library Boy	64
Library clips.....	64
Library Girl knits!.....	64
Muller In the Middle	64
Of ceiling wax and cabbages.....	64
ricklibrarian	64
RSS4Lib	64
Hunger, Homelessness & Poverty Task Force.....	63
Jenelle.net.....	63
Librarian on the edge	63
library+instruction+technology	63
LOTR Librarian.....	63
Love the Liberry	63
nostuff.org	63
OUseful.Info, the blog.....	63
Outgoing	63
The Gypsy Librarian	63
A Chair, A Fireplace & A Tea Cozy.....	62
AbsTracked.....	62
DigitalKoans.....	62
e3 Information Overload AND Are You 2.0 Yet?.....	62
Intelligence, A Swiss Army Knife, And Charm.....	62
Musings from Vermont	62
Plinius	62
Quædam cuiusdam	62
School Librarian in Action.....	62
The Bruised Edge.....	62
The Itinerant Librarian	62
The Search Principle blog.....	62
Tombrarian.....	62
Walt at Random	62

Currency

Finally (for this overview chapter), consider currency: How recent the most recent post is, taking a fixed deadline. In this case, I use buckets dating back from June 1, 2010—one week, two weeks, four weeks, eight weeks, 13 weeks (the start of the measurement quarter), 17 weeks (essentially 120 days, the cutoff some analyses use for minimal blog activity), 26 weeks (half a year), 52 weeks (a year), and two special buckets: 99 (more than a year) and Ceased (explicitly ceased).

Table 3.9 shows currency for the liblog universe (missing seven blogs that, for one reason or another, were difficult to measure).

Currency	Blogs	Percentage	Cumulative
1	401	31%	31%
2	128	10%	41%
4	132	10%	51%
8	113	9%	60%
13	60	5%	64%
17	36	3%	67%
26	51	4%	71%
52	79	6%	77%
99	246	19%	96%
Ceased	51	4%	100%

Table 3.9: Currency for all blogs

Just under one-third of all blogs had a post within the last week of May 2010; just over half had a post sometime during the month of May; and just under two-thirds had a post *sometime* during the March-May 2010 study period. At the other extreme, roughly one-quarter of the blogs hadn't been updated within half a year, and roughly one out of five hadn't been updated in more than a year. Since groups are determined in part by currency, there's no point in showing currency for any given group.

Bookblogs	Blogs	Percentage	Cumulative
1	59	52%	52%
2	9	8%	60%
4	16	14%	74%
8	4	4%	78%
13	4	4%	81%
17	2	2%	83%
26	5	4%	88%
52	5	4%	92%
99	7	6%	98%
Ceased	2	2%	100%

Table 3.10: Currency for book/review blogs

Book and other review blogs tend to be updated frequently. More than half of these had a post in the last week of May and nearly three-quarters had a post sometime during May 2010. (Technology-oriented blogs show roughly the same distribution as all blogs.)

If you're reading this, you're reading Chapter 3 of *The Liblog Landscape 2007-2010* as it appears in the January 2011 *Cites & Insights*. To see Chapter 1, for an index to blogs named in this book and to help support future research, buy *The Liblog Landscape 2007-2010* at www.lulu.com/content/9829119.

Trends & Quick Takes Story Time

I'm giving pride of place to this September 2, 2009 post by John Wilbanks at *Common Knowledge* because it's rather wonderful. I urge you to go read the post itself. (If you read it already, it's now 16 months later. **Read it again.**)

Wilbanks has noted "an explosion of talk about the future of the scientific article." He's been pushing "the need to enrich articles with semantics" since the mid-1990s, and "for years I was convinced it was right around the corner." Oddly enough, he's now *less* convinced—"and the reasons for that are human, not technical." Given that Wilbanks distinguishes between *articles* (narrative text) and *databases* (the data behind the articles), where semantic methodologies exist and should grow, I think he's making a great point. "The impact of formal semantics on text, which is what humans interface with, has been negligible" despite the apparent benefits.

The problem is that people are the writers. Humans. Not machines. Machines luuuuv semantics. Otherwise they can't tell the difference between a picture and a pitcher (or between a pitcher of water and a baseball pitcher). This is why one should never send one's mother to buy jewelry via Google without the safe browsing mode enabled.

And people don't like formal semantics. I majored in formal semantics, and it's a topic that still gives me headaches.

People like stories.

Scientists are people.

Scientists like stories.

A paper is a story. It tells, in its own way, the story of years of work. Of building expertise. Of design-

ing falsifiable hypotheses. Of the results found in the lab. Of the search to balance those results against the canon and dogma. Of the potential ramification of the results.

There's more here, but that's the key message. I'm a great believer in story as the heart of most communication and much enjoyment, and I think Wilbanks is on the money here. He goes further: One role of publishers should be to *translate* the stories into a form machines can understand, that is, to add formal semantics so the stories can be used by other machines as sets of linked facts.

The semantic article isn't going to come from individual scientists rebelling and marking up their own text. It's going to be a publisher value-added service—"let us make your article integrated, and comprehensible, so that you maximize your citation count and potential collaboration."

It seems like a great idea, one where there's real added value. Is it something today's megapublishers can or will do? That's a different question, and maybe not a relevant one.

What Does NC Mean to You?

That is, in slightly different form, what Creative Commons asked us users a while back, in the form of a moderately difficult survey. I use the CC BY-NC license a *lot*—for C&I, for example—and I've added my own gloss on what NC means for my own work, because "noncommercial" is not nearly as self-explanatory as you'd think.

In September 2009, CC released *Defining Non-commercial*, based on surveys, focus groups and in-depth interviews. You'll find the report at wiki.creativecommons.org/Defining_Noncommercial. There's an 18MB PDF (a 255-page report including 82 pages of text and a lot of appendices) and source documents in OpenOffice formats—and a zipped archive of all the raw data, made available with a CCo (public domain) license, so it can be used in any form, commercial or otherwise. Here are three key paragraphs from the executive summary:

The empirical findings suggest that creators and users approach the question of noncommercial use similarly and that overall, online U.S. creators and users are more alike than different in their understanding of noncommercial use. Both creators and users generally consider uses that earn users money or involve online advertising to be commercial, while uses by organizations, by individuals, or for charitable purposes are less com-

mercial but not decidedly noncommercial. Similarly, uses by for-profit companies are typically considered more commercial. Perceptions of the many use cases studied suggest that with the exception of uses that earn users money or involve advertising—at least until specific case scenarios are presented that disrupt those generalized views of commerciality—there is more uncertainty than clarity around whether specific uses of online content are commercial or noncommercial.

Uses that are more difficult to classify as either commercial or noncommercial also show greater (and often statistically significant) differences between creators and users. As a general rule, creators consider the uses studied to be more noncommercial (less commercial) than users. For example, uses by a not-for-profit organization are generally thought less commercial than uses by a for-profit organization, and even less so by creators than users. The one exception to this pattern is in relation to uses by individuals that are personal or private in nature. Here, it is users (not creators) who believe such uses are less commercial.

The most notable differences among subgroups within each sample of creators and users are between creators who make money from their works, and those who do not, and between users who make money from their uses of others' works, and those who do not. In both cases, those who make money generally rate the uses studied less commercial than those who do not make money. The one exception is, again, with respect to personal or private uses by individuals: users who make money consider these uses more commercial than those who do not make money.

What? You didn't think there was any real question? Those three paragraphs should be enough to convince you that there is—and that it's not an easy question to answer. Is David Lee King's blog a commercial site, such that his reuse of a C&I article would violate my BY-NC license? I *don't* happen to think so—but he does run ads and presumably earns money.

The study (and related blog posts) also provides recommendations on how to use and think about NC...and some cases where NC really isn't the most appropriate license.

Wired to be Google/Twitter Addicts?

That's the premise of Emily Yoffe's August 12, 2009 *Slate* article, "Seeking" (or, in *Slate's* alt-universe page title, "The powerful and mysterious brain circuitry that makes us love Google, Twitter, and text-

ing"). If nothing else, it's a rejoinder to those who say we'll stop searching Real Soon Now because something else (it looks a lot like Push but with a 21st century polish—it's sometimes called the Semantic Web, wrongly I believe) will tell us what we need to know before we even think to ask about it.

Yoffe's fond of faux universalisms, invoking "We" at least five times in the first two paragraphs—e.g., this claim for what "we" (all?) do:

We actually resemble nothing so much as those legendary lab rats that endlessly pressed a lever to give themselves a little electrical jolt to the brain. While we tap, tap away at our search engines, it appears we are stimulating the same system in our brains that scientists accidentally discovered more than 50 years ago when probing rat skulls.

That's the heart of the article—a claim that "we" do this because, like rats, we have a "seeking" emotional state that's the "granddaddy of the [emotional] systems" in all mammals. Dopamine is involved...and I guess I wonder whether "we" all suffer from this addiction to this extent:

Ever find yourself sitting down at the computer just for a second to find out what other movie you saw that actress in, only to look up and realize the search has led to an hour of Googling? Thank dopamine. Our internal sense of time is believed to be controlled by the dopamine system. People with hyperactivity disorder have a shortage of dopamine in their brains, which a recent study suggests may be at the root of the problem. For them even small stretches of time seem to drag. An article by Nicholas Carr in the *Atlantic* last year, "Is Google Making Us Stupid?" speculates that our constant Internet scrolling is remodeling our brains to make it nearly impossible for us to give sustained attention to a long piece of writing. Like the lab rats, we keep hitting "enter" to get our next fix.

According to Yoffe, *all* electronic communication systems (from email on up) feed the same drive...and "Since we're [all?] restless, easily bored creatures, our gadgets give us in abundance qualities the seeking/wanting system finds particularly exciting." This is a dangerous addiction all of us are prone to? Maybe. Then again, maybe not.

The Case Against Apple?

Jason Calacanis posted this on August 8, 2009 at *Calacanis.com*, with "—in Five Parts" replacing the question mark here. It's an interesting piece, if only because Calacanis has been a true Apple lover. Indeed, the post begins

About six years and \$20,000 ago, I made the switch to Apple products after a 20-year love affair with Microsoft.

Calacanis replaces *everything* every two years (other than his big monitors)—and when he wrote this, he had seven iPods, four Mac laptops, two Airports, a Time Capsule, two Mac towers, a Mac Mini, two iMacs and “all three iPhones.” (And an iPartridge in an iPear Tree?) But he’s tiring of Apple, in part because of “Steve Jobs’ peculiar, rigidly closed, and severe worldview.”

Key Point 1: For the past six years, if Steve makes something, I buy it. Sometimes, I buy two (one for my wife).

Key Point 2: I over-pay for Apple products because I perceive them to be better (i.e. Windows-based hardware is 30-50% less—but at 38 years old I don’t care).

What’s the problem? Anti-competitive practices, mostly. This is clearly something that pains Calacanis to say—he says he’s rewritten the post three times over a full year—and tries hard to write about the Five Parts in ways that offer *opportunities* for Apple. Still:

Bottom line: Of all the companies in the United States that could possibly be considered for anti-trust action, Apple is the lead candidate. The US Government, however, seems to be obsessed with Microsoft for legacy reasons and Google for privacy reasons.

The truth is, Google has absolutely no lock-in, collusion or choice issues like Apple’s, and the Internet taught Microsoft long ago that open is better than closed.

The five parts (the first sentence after each digit taken unchanged from the post):

1. Destroying MP3 player innovation through anti-competitive practices. (Among other things, Apple tries its hardest to make it impossible to sync any non-Apple device to iTunes.)
2. Monopolistic practices in telecommunications. This is, of course, the AT&T-only situation, and it may be changing.
3. Draconian App Store policies that are, frankly, insulting.

Imagine for a moment if every application on Windows Mobile or Windows XP had to be approved by Microsoft—how would you react? Exactly. Once again we’ve enabled Steve Jobs’ insane control freak tendencies. This relationship is beyond dysfunctional—we are co-dependent.

4. Being a horrible hypocrite by banning other browsers on the iPhone.
5. Blocking the Google Voice Application on the iPhone.

Oddly enough, there don’t seem to be any comments except one linkspam.

Just a Little Favor...

How many science fiction writers win major awards for a book of blog posts and comments? If you haven’t already visited John Scalzi’s *Whatever* (whatever.scalzi.com), you should. Not only has he been blogging for *more than twelve years*, which is pretty phenomenal, he’s an excellent writer and good thinker and, amazingly, one who can get dozens or hundreds of *thoughtful* comments on his posts. He won the 2009 Hugo for Best Related Book for *Your Hate Mail Will Be Graded: A Decade of Whatever 1998-2008*.

Here, I’m pointing to a lengthy post from September 15, 2009: “On the Asking of Favors From Established Writers.” It’s just over 2,000 words—but it’s accompanied by 348 comments, and Scalzi comment threads are usually well worth reading.

Dear currently unpublished/newbie writers who spend their time bitching about how published/established writers are mean because they won’t read your work/introduce you to their agent/give your manuscript to their editor/get you a job on their television show/whatever other thing it is you want them to do for you:

Scalzi follows that with eight “things you should know,” each with some level-headed commentary. The eight? The job of a writer is to write. A writer’s obligations are not to you. The person who determines what a writer should do for others is the writer, not you. Writers are not dicks for not helping you. People asking for favors from writers often don’t understand the consequences of that favor. People asking favors from writers are often crazy in some undiagnosed way. Writers are not mystical door openers. Writers remember.

If that doesn’t sound like much...well, you gotta read the context. Scalzi spends a *lot* of time helping out other writers and offering advice to newcomers. He’s currently president of SFWA, the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America (guess which two words were added later on?), and I’m guessing that’s a huge timesuck. Given Scalzi’s general amiability, it seems likely that he felt com-

pelled to write this post based on a whole bunch of unfortunate incidents.

Loads of great comments as usual, including #6, quoted here in part:

You know, Mr. Scalzi, this reminds me of the one time when a professional writer/editor offered to critique some of my stuff. I didn't ask, mind you—he *offered*, and his one condition for my accepting that offer was: "Please don't tell anyone that I did this." Oh. Took me a while to figure out why he was worried about that . . .

Some commenters either trivialize the post or just don't get it. That's how things work. (I love #38, by BC Woods: "This is all well and good, but what about asking for your help moving furniture?") I should note that Scalzi is *not* saying "never ask a writer for favors." He *is* saying that you should neither be surprised nor upset if the answer is No.

Quicker Takes

Does your Blu-ray player support BD-Live? Does that question make sense to you? A four-page article in the July 2010 *Home Theater*, "BD-Live Under Scrutiny," considers the technology and its apparent lack of adoption. What's BD-Live? Adding Internet features to Blu-ray discs: It requires a player with Internet access and 1GB of memory, but it also requires support on the disc itself. So far, it's mostly been used for studio promotions and advertising, although there are some special featurettes (which should be on the disc in the first place). The article seems to say BD-Live just hasn't found its "killer app." I'm more inclined to believe it's a mostly-pointless technology. My own take? When we finally got a (great!) wide-screen HDTV and a new player to go along with it, we definitely got Blu-ray—but we didn't pay the extra \$30 for a BD-Live model. Just didn't see the point.

➤ Here's a mildly strange one: *New Liberal Arts*, an 80-page book with 21 "ideas" that began as a limited edition (200 copies) print book and continues as a free PDF, now that all 200 copies have sold. It's nice to see "ransoming" a free version works for some people; it doesn't for others. If you want to read the little book, start at www.snarkmarket.com/nla/# and choose your version. When I say "little," I don't just mean 88 pages—most of those pages are nearly blank. The HTML version yields a 27-page print preview, and if you

strip out contributor's bios the whole thing is considerably less than 9,000 words, or about half of a typical C&I issue (three times the length of this TRENDS & QUICK TAKES). I read through it in ten minutes and wasn't impressed; you may find it more worthwhile.

- Since my pile of tagged items on ebooks and ereaders is uncomfortably large and my desire to write about them is surprisingly small, maybe it's best to toss the occasional item in here—such as "Are ebooks the new CD-ROM?" by "damyanti" on *Buns! Blankets! Bears!*, posted in September 2009. Noting some ebooks being announced with enhancements, the writer wonders whether ebooks will actually make reading more "immersive and media rich" and whether they could create a more collaborative reading experience—or whether they'll become "just the new CD-ROM," which I assume points to failure. I could argue that the *most* immersive books are text-only, but that's a separate question. Only two comments on a relatively brief post; the conversation didn't move forward. Perhaps unfortunate.
- I haven't written much about "the cloud" and don't plan to start now, for a variety of reasons. One of those reasons is that The Cloud is sort of a meaningless term. On that topic, you could do a lot worse than to read some of Jason Scott's stuff at *ASCII* (ascii.textfiles.com), such as "Oh Boy, The Cloud" on October 5, 2009, earlier posts linked from that one, "Outlook is Cloudy" on October 11, 2009 (after a whole bunch of T-Mobile Sidekick owners lost all their cloud-based data) and more since then (including one on December 22, 2009 that will go nameless here because, well, this is a genteel publication). I love this quote from Leslie Lamport (in the first comment on the October 11 post): "A distributed system is one in which the failure of a computer you didn't even know existed can render your own computer unusable."
- I've discussed "wireless power" before, always with a sense that *it really can't work* in an environmentally responsible way: You *can't* get anywhere close to 100% efficiency in any such situation, with the reality prob-

ably a lot worse. An October 23, 2009 *GigaOm* item, “Wireless Power Is Still Pretty Useless,” discusses a couple of wireless devices that are only nominally wireless: Duracell MyGrid and the Powermat, both of which are plugged-in mats that can charge portable devices *sitting directly on the mat with special adapters attached*. A longer report calls these “lifestyle technologies,” mostly for people willing to spend \$140 or more to avoid plugging in a device charger. The author of the piece answers a question about environmental responsibility: Yes, of course these devices waste power. I’m guessing “over-the-air power transmission” will waste a lot more power.

The CD-ROM Project The Parks

Remember when there were CD-ROMs to build routes from one place to another? Those weren’t title CD-ROMs as such; they were one of the cases where the web (and non-internet solutions relying directly on GPS) seem indisputably better than CD-ROM, quite apart from being free.

There are location-related title CD-ROMs that might still have value. The three CD-ROMs discussed here are all about national parks: One focusing on some national parks in the western United States (and the two non-contiguous states), one about all of the national parks and one on the Grand Canyon. As I remember the last one, it was so computationally intensive that it ran sluggishly on the most powerful PCs I had at the time. But times have changed. Let’s see what still works, how well they work and whether there are good replacements. (**Caution:** This is a discouraging trio, which you might just as well skip.)

Know Before You Go: Western, Alaskan and Hawaiian National Parks

This Everest Multimedia CD-ROM appeared in June 1996. It’s part of a supposed series of “Know Before You Go” CD-ROMs and says it’s compatible with Windows NT (3.51 to 4.0 or ’95) and Windows 3.1x—so it might just work.

I gave it an excellent rating in May 1997, calling it “beautifully-done” with a wide range of informa-

tion on each of 28 parks, including quite good general essays, although the maps of the parks were weak. There are 171 full-screen photos; the interface uses Windows conventions (with one key exception) and takes up the entire screen, using it all well. The exception: The middle Windows icon is grayed out—you can only minimize the window or run it full screen. That meant I couldn’t move it to my larger display, but that’s not too surprising.

How it works now

The install is fast and minimal, although the claimed need for a Windows restart shouldn’t be there. It only installs about 2MB (I left out the screensaver); basically, this runs entirely from the CD-ROM. It works just fine—such as it is.

I’m less enthralled now than I was 13 years ago. The photos, while still good, seem less impressive. The sound effects seem intrusive rather than helpful. Most “category” information—lodging, dining, etc.—dates rapidly. And, of course, the total lack of integration with the web, while not unusual in 1997, is odd in 2010. It’s still a “polite disc” but considerably past its prime. If your library has a copy of this disc, it should still work just fine, and the general information is sound, noting that the 28 parks covered are nowhere near all the national parks in those states. The text is fully searchable.

Contemporary alternatives

The CD-ROM is still available; it’s not clear whether it’s been updated. One vendor has it for \$19, down from the original \$30.

Better yet, start at nps.gov for *all* the national parks, offering more up to date text, more and better photos and, of course, weblinks as appropriate and fully compatible operation on Windows, Mac, Linux or anything with a browser. A little judicious Binging or Googling on park names will yield all the dining, lodging and travel advice you could want, *considerably* more up to date.

The disc was good for its time. That time has gone. You’re better off at nps.gov and beyond.

Exploring America’s National Parks

This 1995 disc from Multicom says it deals with “hundreds of America’s parks,” features “inspiring photographs by the legendary David Muench, spectacular videos and vast data search capabilities” and is designed for both Windows and Macintosh. I reviewed it in December 1997, giving it a

Very Good rating and saying it “shows its age slightly” but had a superb set of photographs and a good interface and fairly extensive information. At the time, you could buy the disc alone for \$30 or the disc and a first-rate book of photos for \$40. Comparing the two discs at the time, I found that this had better photos and covered more parks—but had less information on most parks. It also ran in Macromedia Director, which put an error message on each slide if your computer was set for more than 256 colors.

How it works now

It doesn't. Autorun causes Windows to ask you for permission for an unknown application to change your disk. Say yes, and a version of the CD's cover takes over your entire screen—no window controls, no nothing. And that's it: The install never continues, at least on my machine. By right clicking on my secondary screen, I was able to restore the toolbar and close the window. However this actually installs, it's incompatible with modern versions of Windows. (I tried it a second time, directly double-clicking on the SETUP.EXE file. Same deal.) I'm guessing it would do no better with Mac OS X.

Contemporary alternatives

Did I mention nps.gov?

Overstock appears to have a newer (?) version that claims compatibility with Windows 95, 98, ME and XP, selling for \$6.49, but based on user reviews, I'm guessing this version also doesn't work with Vista or Windows 7. Amazon has the book and CD-ROM combo, used, for \$17; although it lists a different publisher (Multimedia 2000), it's the same version. Best guess: It probably won't work, but the book might be worthwhile.

You can find lots of David Muench's glorious landscape and nature photography on the web, to be sure, along with some of the dozens of books he's worked on.

Explore the Grand Canyon

This 1995 Coriolis Group Media title came with a 72-page 7x8.5" user's guide. It claims compatibility with Windows 3.1 and Windows 95—and a sign of its advanced implementation is the video requirements for 1995: at least 800x600 resolution with 65,000 simultaneous colors, but “true color” (24-bit color) and a graphics card highly recom-

mended. It wants a Pentium PC and at least 16MB RAM; it will only run on Windows 3.1 and 8MB RAM if you disable networking.

CD-ROM Professional had an article about the making of the CD-ROM; in September 1996, I reviewed the product there and noted the “incredible difficulties I had reviewing it at all.” By June 1997, I had a more powerful PC, one that considerably exceeded the minimum requirements, and reviewed it again. I called it a tour de force with its remarkable *creation* of 3D Grand Canyon landscapes from a digital database, “but that creation process is so computer-intensive that it's uncomfortably slow even on my new system. A high-definition image takes five seconds or longer to appear; anything less than a high-definition image won't include the hotspots that make the disc so interesting.” The disc includes more than 3,000 “excellent photographs,” hours of narration, music and sound, USGS navigation maps, a “charming elapsed-time river trip” and the 3D Virtual Landscape itself. There's no real searchable database, however—you could only find things by exploring the maps and following hyperlinks. I gave it a Very Good rating as a way to enrich your understanding of the Grand Canyon once you've been there—and “where else could you see 3,000 high-quality pictures of details of the Grand Canyon?”

How it works today

My current computer doesn't have a graphics accelerator card, but it certainly far exceeds the other requirements of the disc and, of course, runs in 24-bit color mode. The install seemed to go just fine. Startup works as advertised, opening a small title screen and two other windows—but the other two windows, while movable, aren't really Windows windows: they can't be resized and have their own quixotic minimize button.

One window has pictures on the left and a text stream on the right with some links. You can play a narrated version of that introduction or you can click on the links, which bring up other text and pictures (sometimes with sound in the background).

What you *can't* do: Get back to the introduction...or make anything in the control window (the smaller window) work, including Exit. For whatever reason, the program, while recognizing the cursor, doesn't actually *do* anything in the upper window (or in the lower window except for hyperlinks), so most of the program is effectively not

there. Exploring the disc itself shows that photos are in an unrecognized format and most .AVI files are sound-only. The topo data and maps are all also unrecognized formats.

Bottom line: 99% of the program simply doesn't work in Windows 7. What a shame.

Contemporary alternatives

You'll find plenty of sites, including at least one with scores of high-quality photos. And, of course, you can use Bing for a bird's-eye view or Google maps satellite images, and either search system will provide thousands of photo.

Is there an equivalent to the generated 3D images on this CD-ROM or the combined sets of images and text? There might be, but in limited searching I didn't find one. In any case, the product no longer really works at all—and I didn't find a contemporary version.

Offtopic Perspective

Legends of Horror Part 2

Disc 7

The She-Beast (orig. *La sorella di Satana*), 1966, b&w. Michael Reeves (dir.), Barbara Steele, Kohn Karlsen, Ian Ogilvy, Mel Welles. 1:19.

We start with a drunken guy lurching down a tunnel, picking up an odd semi-book and reading about the death of a witch in 1766—not an innocent this time, but an evil woman who killed children. The townsfolk, led by the priest, grab her, tie her to a dunking chair, pound a stake through her and then repeatedly dunk her in a lake as she curses the entire town—although you'd think the stake would have done the job. The townsfolk seem to be doing some early version of The Wave or some odd form of aerobic dance while this is happening. Meanwhile, a little person and a regal sort watch this from a nearby hillside.

Back to the present, where a handsome young couple of Brits find themselves lost in Transylvania (where the flashback was also set), getting out of their Beetle to check maps. A loutish cop happens by on a bicycle and points them to the nearby town with "lots of hotels," only one of which is open. They go to this dump of a hotel, where they find a loutish hotel owner and the drunk (now sober and regal in bearing) swinging on an adult-size swing set. Since it's 40 miles to the next town and getting dark, they decide to stay the night—on what turns out to be their honeymoon. The ho-

tel owner is also a voyeur (and, we later find, would-be rapist), and things start getting strange...and the next morning as they drive off, the car won't steer properly and they end up in the lake. She's drowned (presumably), he's not—and the trucker who saw the accident takes both of them back to the hotel, saying not to call the police because they'll just cause trouble.

That's just the beginning. The witch has taken on the spirit of the wife; the regal guy—who turns out to be Count Von Helsing, the Von Helsing having stayed around since offering the vampires to deal with other demonic issues—brings her (now in witch form) back to life as part of some convoluted exorcism scheme (she wasn't properly exorcised the first time around), and she escapes and starts killing descendants of the original villagers. Von Helsing drives a bright yellow Model T (or some other crank-started car), for what that's worth.

So far, a straightforward horror film...but then it descends into a combination of farce, presumed commentary on the incompetence of Communist officials (this was set in Romania), car chases (with scooters involved), Keystone Kop antics and more. Eventually, things work out, but it's a truly odd third-rate flick that seems to have started out as horror, run out of plot ideas (or money?) and turned into a strange mélange. In case you're a Barbara Steele fan: She's barely even in this movie, there for perhaps ten minutes total. The print's not very good, the acting's no better and I honestly can't give this mess more than \$0.75.

Manfish, 1956, b&w (this print). W. Lee Wilder (dir.), John Bromfield, Lon Chaney, Jr., Victor Jory, Barbara Nichols, Tessa Prendergast. 1:28.

Airplane (propeller-driven) lands at Montego Bay airport. Guy gets off, goes to constabulary, says he's come from Scotland Yard to pick up a prisoner. The local cop says he can't have the prisoner and tells a story...which is the picture (although people getting on the airplane show over closing credits).

The story: Four guys on a turtle boat (people who grab and sell giant turtles, presumably still legal in 1956), with it becoming clear that the captain is sort of a jackass—he's a gambler, doesn't pay his crew, is about to lose the boat over debt. The name of the boat? Manfish, thus the name of the movie. The two divers discover a skeleton in the water, panic, return to boat. The captain finds the skeleton, takes a bottle and message out of the bony hand. The message is half of a treasure map written in French.

All else evolves from that, and includes an aged Brit living on an out island with his local woman, who turns out to have the other half of the map.

The two (plus the boat's skipper, regularly derided as stupid and ignorant by the captain but clearly the best man of the lot) go hunting for the treasure—and find it, the old guy only staying alive because he's memorized the map and burned both halves, and says there's *more* (and much bigger) treasure elsewhere.

A big portion of the film has to do with a murder, the long time required to hide the body and a leaking scuba tank that gives us a *Tell Tale Heart* scenario (yes, the movie credits say it was based on that and another Poe story, *The Gold Bug*). Murder eventually does out, and the only character I found at all sympathetic—the skipper—ends up doing the best of anybody.

This is a slow-moving, almost languid film, with lots of scuba diving in coral reefs, climbing over scenic rivers and waterfalls and other scenery. (Never mind the director's bizarre method of cutting—rapid sweeps from one scene to another.) I thought: "This would be a much better film in color"—still seriously flawed, but at least a decent flick. Then we get to the very last credit: Color by Deluxe. Not in this print it ain't, and the print's badly damaged at points as well. Too bad. Color scenery (in a really good print) would have helped a lot. As it is, the best thing this has going for it may be Lon Chaney—appearing with that name, although it's apparently Lon Chaney, Jr. Charitably, \$1.

The Devil Bat, 1940, b&w. Jean Yarbrough (dir.), Bela Lugosi, Suzanne Kaaren, Dave O'Brien, Guy Usher, Yolande Donlan, Donald Kerr. 1:08.

Bela Lugosi as a mad scientist—mad in both the "really upset about something" sense and the slightly deranged sense: Check. Absurd method of taking revenge on one's enemies—in this case, by getting them to test a new and fairly pungent after-shave lotion (or perfume), then releasing a humongous bat (made larger by electrical stimulation in a classic mad scientist's lair) that hates the scent and kills the victims: Check. Generally implausible plot and second-rate acting: Check.

And yet, this one's not so awful. OK, it's thoroughly implausible—Lugosi is portrayed as the Beloved Family Doctor who's also the Brilliant Chemist whose concoctions form the basis for the town's primary employer, a cosmetics company whose founders paid him \$10,000 for the formulas because he didn't want to be part of the company. (But he frequently speaks as though he's part of the company, and is still concocting formulas for them.) He feels cheated, so he's out to slay the two founding families. Enter an out-of-town reporter and his photographer sidekick (nicknamed "One-Shot" and I think he only manages one good shot

in the entire movie). Oh, did I mention a beautiful young woman who's part of a founding family, and who has a nice-looking maid? Do I need to go further? (The less said about the quality of the special-effects bat, the better.)

Somehow, it works better than most of Lugosi's mad-scientist, low-budget horrors. I'll give it \$1.25.

The Devil's Messenger, 1961, b&w. Herbert L. Strock (dir.), Lon Chaney Jr., Karen Kadler, Michael Hinn, Ralph Brown, John Crawford. 1:12.

A curious trilogy of temptation, framed by the gateway to Hell, with Lon Chaney Jr. as the friendly old gatekeeper (or Satan, maybe) who greets people, looks them up in his big Rolodex, comments on what got them there and sends them through the open door to the fiery pits. Lots of people waiting in line coming down rocky stairs...

There's a young woman, Satanya, who took her own life. The gatekeeper offers her a deal: Make a delivery Back Above (which turns out to be three deliveries) and The Tribunal will consider her case—after all, suicide doesn't hurt a bunch of other people. So she does, and each delivery leads to murder and death. First, there's a photographer who, when he meets a beautiful woman at a snowy farmhouse where his agent has ordered him to vacation, somehow finds it necessary to kill her...and deals with the ghostly outcomes badly. Second, there's a frozen woman found in a glacier by Swedish miners and one scientist's obsession with her. Finally, Satanya goes back to deal with the former lover whose rejection caused her suicide, in a tale that involves crystal balls (always the tool of the devil, don'tcha know). Apparently, this is a feature version made from three episodes of a Swedish TV series; it's assembled into a not-too-bad combination (although Chaney doesn't do much of anything). The tacked-on ending is, well, a waste of footage.

Unfortunately, the sound's frequently distorted and the print badly digitized. That makes what might otherwise be a nice little trio of horror tales difficult to watch and reduces its score to \$0.75.

Disc 8

Shock, 1946, b&w. Alfred L. Werker (dir.), Vincent Price, Lynn Bari, Anabel Shaw, Frank Latimore, Stephen Dunne. 1:10.

Young lady arrives at a San Francisco hotel excited because her husband, assumed dead for two years but really a POW, will be meeting her—but they've lost her reservation. The manager finds her a room (a suite) for one night only. As she's waiting for her hubby, she goes out on the balcony and sees, inside a nearby room with the drapes

open, an argument that ends with a husband clubbing his wife to death with a candlestick.

Does she call the desk? Notify the police? Nope—she goes into shock. When her husband arrives *much* later (the plane was delayed), he finds her sitting on the sofa, wide-eyed but unresponsive. A doctor checks her over and says it's mental—but what luck! There's a great psychiatrist in the hotel. Who just happens to be the wife-killer. And who takes her to his asylum...where his nurse (and lover) would just as soon make sure she doesn't get well.

That's the plot. It also involves an odd crisis of conscience, in which one person murders another because of unwillingness to kill a third. Vincent Price is Vincent Price. The sound is occasionally distorted, but the print's pretty good. All in all, a middling \$1.00.

The Island Monster (orig. *Il mostro dell'isola*), 1954, b&w. Roberto Montero (dir.), Boris Karloff, Franca Marzi, Patrizia Remiddi, Carlo Duse. 1:27 [1:25].

The sleeve gets the plot wrong—and maybe that's because the plot is incoherent, as is this mystery in general. (It's not a horror film, but Boris Karloff is a Legend of Horror...) It involves Italian drug smuggling on Ischia, a seeming benefactor who's really the villain (guess who?), a police undercover agent whose wife is so jealous she insists on, essentially, blowing his cover and making his daughter a suitable kidnapping target, and ever so much more.

I won't attempt to summarize the plot or how it progresses. It's badly dubbed (I could almost see the English-speaking dubbers sitting around a table, cigarettes and drinks in hand, reading from the script as the footage flashed on a screen), badly acted, just plain bad. At least the dubbers found a mediocre Karloff voice impersonator. I see IMDB reviews average out to 2.2 points on a 10-point scale—and that may be generous. (Turns out it is: One crazed Karloff fan gave it 10 points, balancing out all the 0, 1 and 2 point scores). For anyone who likes either good movies or so-bad-they're-good movies, this is one to avoid completely, but for Karloff completists only, I'll give it \$0.75.

The Lady Vanishes. Previously reviewed. \$2.50

Rich and Strange. Previously reviewed. \$0.75

Disc 9

All previously-reviewed Hitchcock films: *Easy Virtue* (\$1.00), *Secret Agent* (\$2), *The Skin Game* (\$1.25), *The 39 Steps* (\$2).

Disc 10

This disc points up why I probably shouldn't be doing these reviews. I loathe gore flicks and what

now seem to be standard slasher horrorshows with their oodles of "blood" and crazed killers. I almost stopped watching the first flick 20 minutes in—and that might have been the right decision. If you're a fan of stupid bloody horror, ignore these reviews. If you're a true connoisseur of "holiday axe murderers" and the like...I really don't want to know about it.

Silent Night, Bloody Night, 1974, color. Theodore Gershuny (dir.), Patrick O'Neal, James Patterson, Mary Woronov, Astrid Heeren, John Carradine, Walter Abel. 1:28 [1:21]

The idiocy starts at the beginning, as a man whose coat is on fire runs from a house into a snow-covered field—and doesn't drop-and-roll, even by accident. Nope. No matter how often he falls down, he always falls forward (so the coat can keep burning) and he gets back up and keeps running as he's burning to death.

That's a flashback. Today, we have a long-abandoned house about to be sold. A devil-may-care adulterous lawyer has come up with his hot French girlfriend to sell it for quick cash, by order of an owner he's never met—and, of course, they stay the night in the abandoned house, not in the motel the town council suggests. People always respond to mystery messages by going, one at a time, usually unarmed, to meet their fates. =If you want to stretch things far enough, you could conclude that Only The Good Survived...

Awful, awful, awful. Badly filmed, poorly acted (John Carradine doesn't help matters and Patrick O'Neal is a joke), crappy direction, poor production and a worthless screenplay. Maybe the one good thing it has is the opening music—a minor-key arrangement of *Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht* that's surprisingly unsettling. I'm being exceedingly generous to give this piece of trash \$0.25.

Horror Express (aka *Panic in the Trans-Siberian Train*), 1972, color. Eugenio Martin (dir.), Christopher Lee, Peter Cushing, Alberto de Mendoza, Julio Pena, Angel del Pozo, Telly Savalas. 1:28.

This is a cross between science fiction and horror, beginning with an expedition in China but with all the action taking place on the Trans-Siberian Express. A British anthropologist has discovered a "fossil"—some sort of caveman or missing link encased in a block of ice. Another scientist is returning with his assistant. The train also includes a count, countess, their crazed Russian priest, a beautiful spy and a police chief—and an engineer who studied under Tsiolkovsky, the early Russian rocket theorist.

All of which comes into play as we get one corpse and another, in both cases with wholly white eyes. After one scientist (who's also a medical doctor) notes that the eyes on a steamed fish at dinner are wholly white, he does an autopsy on the second victim—and finds that the brain is entirely smooth, which (he intuits) means that their memories have all been sucked out. Okay...well, things continue, and we learn much more along with quite a few deaths along the way, all with the same briefly horrible eye-bleeding/eye-whitening scene, always in the dark or near dark. I won't give more of the plot away, such as it is, except to note that it ends with a deliberate train crash but also most potential victims saved. We get mind/being transfer and even blind zombies of a sort.

Telly Savalas as a scenery-chewing Cossack. A strong cast (Lee and Cushing are the two scientists), interesting script and decent acting. It's entirely on a train ride (after the first few minutes)—always a good way to enhance mystery and suspense. The print is a little wonky at times and never all that good. All in all, \$1.50.

The Nightmare Never Ends (orig. *Cataclysm*), 1979, color. Phillip Marshak (and others, dir.), Cameron Mitchell, Marc Lawrence, Faith Cliff, Richard Moll, Maurice Grandmaison. 1:34 [1:28]

Life really is too short. I gave this half an hour, which is probably 15 minutes too long. Given the miserable quality of the print (soft, with bad colors—it's not clear whether the bad colors are deliberate), lousy production (from what I could see) and incoherent plot, direction, script and acting, I couldn't see watching the whole thing.

What I could get of the plot up to that point: There's a famous (Nobel laureate!) professor who's an atheist and has just published his most important work, *God is Dead*. His beautiful wife is a doctor and a devout Catholic, who firmly believes in God and Satan. There's a Las Vegas fake clairvoyance act, where the admittedly phony clairvoyant dies (or is murdered) immediately after getting the wife to visualize her nightmare around a Nazi dinner party. There's an old Jewish Nazi hunter who's almost entirely incoherent but who believes a young man is actually one of his targets from 35 years previous—and who gets his face ripped off as he's being killed.

I'm sure there's more, but I found it unwatchable because of the print and the movie itself. Cameron Mitchell's cop isn't terribly well played but stands out among the rest of this. Looking at IMDB, it appears that it isn't just a bad print or digitization; it's a lousy film with bad production values and terrible acting and plot. It gets a rare \$0.

Count Dracula and His Vampire Bride (orig. *The Satanic Rites of Dracula*), 1973, color, widescreen. Alan Gibson (dir.), Christopher Lee, Peter Cushing, Michael Coles, William Franklyn, Freddie Jones, Joanna Lumley, Richard Vernon, Barbara Yu Ling. 1:27.

The final Hammer film with Christopher Lee as Count Dracula and Peter Cushing as Dr. Von Helsing, presented in wide screen (not anamorphic, but a zoom mode should work) and in a decent print (with damage in a few spots). Contemporary setting, with Dracula as an industrialist poised to unleash a much more deadly version of The Plague. Some nudity (mostly as part of a Satanic ritual), some violence, lots of female vampires, evil in high places.

Pretty good as these things go—after all, with Lee and Cushing in a Hammer film, how far wrong can you go? Some of the plot is a little bizarre (why would Dracula want to destroy the entire world?) and the addition of hawthorne trees (not just stakes) as deadly to vampires seems odd, but, well... As to the title: It involves Von Helsing's beautiful granddaughter (Joanna Lumley) and is a little misleading, but there you go—the original title makes more sense. \$1.50.

Disc 11

It's Never Too Late (or *It's Never Too Late to Mend*), 1937, b&w. David MacDonald (dir.), Tod Slaughter, Jack Livesey, Marjorie Taylor, Ian Colin, Laurence Hanray, D.J. Williams, Roy Russell. 1:10 [1:07].

This film is a horror, all right—another example of Tod “Snidely Whiplash” Slaughter's astonishing range of acting, from V to Villainous to...V for Villainous. The excuse for this one is that it's supposedly based on a book that exposed the horrors of 19th-century British prisons and caused Queen Victoria to clean them up. Maybe, but prison scenes (as brutal as they are, with the “visiting justices” apparently competing to see how vicious they can be towards prisoners) aren't all of the film.

The plot? A young woman loves a young man who's having trouble making a farm pay off. The Squire, a typical villain-tending-toward-insanity Slaughter role, wants the young woman for his own. He fails in framing the young man for poaching (which leads to most of the prison scenes, since an innocent friend of the young man “confesses” to prevent the frame), but the young man must go off to Australia to win his fortune, without which the young woman's father will forbid the union.

The Squire, also the local Justice of the Peace, suborns the postman to assure that no letters between the two ever reach their destination, cultivates the father, and variously twirls his mustache

and otherwise sneers. Oh, in the end, he fails, of course...another hallmark of a Slaughter flick.

The only reason I'd give this any rating at all is for Slaughter fans (which apparently include every IMDB reviewer of this piece of...well, never mind.) In that case, I guess it's no worse than most. As a revelation of bad conditions in prisons, it's apparently several decades too late and mostly consists of sneering. As a Slaughter film, after which I had to go wash my hands and brain...well, kindly, \$0.75.

The Bowery at Midnight, 1942, b&w. Wallace Fox (dir.), Bela Lugosi, John Archer, Wanda McKay, Tom Neal, Vince Barnett, Anna Hope. 1:01.

It's an hour long. It stars Bela Lugosi in a role with two names. It's...an incoherent mess, and maybe I shouldn't be surprised. The only plausible explanation I can see for the way this movie doesn't work is that it's a summary version of a bad serial—but that seems not to be the case. It's surely a bad movie. This time Lugosi's not a mad scientist; he's a professor of psychology who, in the evenings, runs a soup kitchen up top and an incredibly evil gang down below—a gang that pointedly leaves one of its members as corpse at each robbery.

Or does it? The has-been doctor who's a support person (I guess) for this gang (which, at the point of the film, has maybe two members at a time) seems to be doing things with their bodies. Near the end, a bunch of fatalities seem to be taking care of the evil mastermind. I'd say "oh good, zombies," but the very end has one apparent fatality reunited with his girlfriend.

Awful, awful, awful. Also, portions of the print are so faded as to be nearly unwatchable and some dialog is missing just enough syllables for unintelligibility—which, fortunately, doesn't harm this picture all that much. (Reading some of the IMDB raves for this trash...I guess true fans are true fans.) For Bela Lugosi completists, maybe, charitably, \$0.50.

Number Seventeen. Previously reviewed, \$1.75.

The Face at the Window, 1939, b&w. George King (dir.), Tod Slaughter...and what else do you need to know? 1:10 [1:04]

Mercy, I beg of you, mercy: Not another Slaughter melodrama! I tried. Honest, I did. And when the nobleman played by Slaughter attempted to woo the young woman half his age and began laughing His Laugh when informed she was in love with someone else...I snapped. No more, no more: Even 40 minutes more of Tod Slaughtering another role was too much.

The plot, from the sleeve: "The Wolf" is murdering people in Paris with no clues—and is, well,

who else? I can predict the rest: The nobleman does his best to ruin the young man, does various evil deeds, and is eventually caught out, with good triumphing. Some of the same cast as *The Ticket of Leave Man*. Since I gave up part way through, I'll just say that I hope never to ~~encounter~~ endure another Slaughter melodrama. \$0.

The Shadow of Silk Lennox, 1935, b&w. Ray Kirkwood & Jack Nelson (dir.), Lon Chaney Jr., Dean Benton, Marie Burton, Jack Mulhall, Eddie Gribbon, Theodore Lorch. 1:00.

Another one that involves a "Legend of Horror"—if Lon Chaney, Jr., deserves that moniker. This one's a gangster mystery/musical of sorts, featuring Chaney as a nightclub owner whom everybody assumes, correctly, is a gangster. The sleeve description seems entirely offbase: Everybody *knows* he's a gangleader, and he doesn't start killing off associates until one of them doublecrosses him.

The key, such as it is, is that he's got locals in his pocket, making sure he's bailed out and intimidating witnesses so nobody faults him (one sequence shows just how easy that is when anybody's allowed into a lineup). But then the G-men arrive and things go wrong. There's one plot line that appears to be a red herring and an undercover agent who's accepted far too readily as being a safecracker who can also escape from jail. And there are musical numbers—quite a few of them for a one-hour flick. Unfortunately, the sound track's extremely noisy through much of the film (the print's also damaged at times).

Chaney Jr.'s not that impressive, and neither is the movie. I suppose it's worth \$0.75.

Disc 12

All previously-reviewed Hitchcock films: *Champagne*, \$1.00; *Juno and the Paycock*, \$0.75; *The Manxman*, \$1; *Alfred Hitchcock Presents: The Chaney Vase*, \$0.55; *Alfred Hitchcock Presents: The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, \$0.

Summing Up

What a relief: That's all there is. I knew going in that I wasn't much of a horror fan, but I think only the most dedicated old-"horror"-movie fans would care much for this assortment—or maybe early Hitchcock fans who don't know about the 20-movie set with its added near-hour of trailers for other Hitchcock films.

Perhaps being generous, I gave two flicks in this half of the set \$1.50: *Horror Express* and *Count Dracula and His Vampire Bride*. That's two more

than in the first half—but I couldn't find a single flick worth \$1.75 or \$2. Adding up non-Hitchcock values, I get \$6.25 for movies I thought were at least mediocre and \$10.75 if you include the losers. That makes \$14 even for the whole box or if you're a glutton for punishment, \$24.

If you're a completist for Tod Slaughter or Lon Chaney Jr. or Bela Lugosi or Barbara Steele, this set might be worth the \$22.50 Amazon currently sells it for. Otherwise, I'd say skip it.

My Back Pages

Fish in a Barrel

Apologies up front: I'm being snarky about a *Wired* article making stupid overgeneralizations that serve readers badly. Yeah, I know, that's standard fare for the magazine, particularly when combined with *ooh shiny* futurism.

This time around, it's in "Welcome to Wired University" in the October 2010 issue. The example that rubbed me *entirely* the wrong way is the "Why take this course?" description for "Remix Culture":

Modern artists don't start with a blank page or empty canvas. They start with preexisting works.

Not "some modern artists" but *modern artists*. The examples? "Art" such as creating an album from sounds taken from other album, the deeply artistic "Garfield Minus Garfield" comic strip. And this sentence to confirm the earlier one:

The creative act is no longer about building something out of nothing but rather building something new out of cultural products that already exist.

So, you know, if you actually *paint something* or *write a novel* or *compose an original song*—all of which, to be sure, draw on earlier ideas and works, as has *always* been true for most creativity—you're not engaging in "the creative act" any more. Nope; to be creative, you must engage in deconstruction and sampling and that sort of thing.

I don't doubt that some sampling and remix amounts to creativity of a sort. But to make this the basis for *all* creativity or the "creative act" is...oh, never mind.

It's Only Money

The October 2010 *Home Theater* devotes a long and nearly drooling article to Kaleidescape's media servers and players—an article that begins with

much the same reaction I had when I first heard of Kaleidescape. The starter system cost \$30,000 and the big deal was being able to play back a DVD without loading the disc.

My first thought was something like, "Wow, life is really expensive for people who don't want to get up and walk a few feet to get a disc and put it into a DVD player."

The writer—who's also the editor—has now Seen The Light. He says he was "exceptionally ignorant and shortsighted" and his cynicism "lasted roughly two and a half to three seconds into actually using a Kaleidescape." What makes it worth so much money (admittedly, not *quite* as much as before)? "It's about changing the way you browse and experience your content at least as much as it's about storing your digital content on a server."

What is it? At least one server, starting at \$9,995 and going *way* up, and at least one player (\$3,995—but there's a version with no disc drive that's a mere \$2,495: That's right, \$1,500 for a Blu-ray drive without its own power supply and cabinet!). The server supports up to five independent streams of media at up to Blu-ray quality through wired Internet to the Players—which connect to your TV or whatever. So, for \$14,000 and up, you have a media server. But it's got a *great interface*. But if you want to actually *watch* a Blu-ray disc, you also need to put the disc itself into one of your Players (it's a DRM issue) so the convenience is really only for DVDs and CDs. In any case, even a maxed-out 1U Server (at about \$12,500) only handles 150 Blu-ray Discs. (I think that's a little high: It has 6TB data space and a double-layer Blu-ray Disc can be 50GB, so figure 120 discs as a lower limit.)

What's that you say? Paying an extra \$16,500 for a fancy interface to choose the Blu-ray Disc you want to play, *when you still have to put the disc in the tray*, seems a bit much? Particularly when 120 Blu-ray Discs certainly shouldn't cost you much more than \$3,000-\$4,000? (Have two TVs in two rooms? Buy two copies of each disc: Still a *lot* cheaper.) You find it too difficult to browse through 120 discs? There's a solution of sorts: the forthcoming Modular Disc Vault will *hold* 100 Blu-ray Discs for another \$1,500.

After reading the whole article, I think I'm back to the author's original view: Wow, life is really expensive for people who don't want to get a disc and put it into a Blu-ray player.

Suppose You Pulled a Hoax...

...and nobody noticed? While the *Chronicle of Higher Education* story's more than a year old (August 3, 2009, by Peter Monaghan), it's still amusing. A review essay on David Foster Wallace's *Oblivion* ran in the Modernist Studies Association's peer-reviewed journal *Modernism/Modernity*—an essay written by a nonexistent scholar at a nonexistent college. Monaghan details some of the hints within the essay itself that it's a phony, calls it a “relatively transparent con” and wonders why there wasn't much response. Other than the obvious answer (Does anyone *read* these essays?), there's the suggestion that the hoax was so obvious it didn't require exposing—except that at least two grad students have cited it as real research.

This being modern literary studies, you can get into much more arcane issues—e.g., a suggestion that the hoax was “an exercise in performative criticism” (I first read that as “preformative criticism” and it makes as much sense that way). Was the hoax a failure of peer review or a deliberate joke inserted by an editor? *Does it matter?*

Get Offa My Lawn

That's how I read Ken Pohlmann's October 2010 “thefinalcut” column in *Sound+Vision*, although the title is “Google-Eyed.” Pohlmann doesn't like the idea of Google TV: it's too much convergence for his taste.

Just like the multitudes that absolutely must have a phone with a picture of a fruit on it, I'm sure that many of you will want Google TV. All you eBay junkies and Amazon addicts and Facebook weenies, please don't bring this down on the rest of us. I don't want to have to read tweets while watching the game, and I sure as hell don't want to answer memos from my boss while staring at Angelina. Please, I'm begging you—keep TV mindlessly passive. Just say no to Google TV.

I should be sympathetic. When I watch TV, I watch TV—I don't simultaneously read or use a notebook. But I also don't see anybody forcing me to use Google TV or forcing me to use interactive features if I choose to do so. Here's the thing: Pohlmann, who's been touting Digital Everything, Newer is Better and all the future hype for so many years, is simply not the right person to be saying this. I don't know how old he is, but it's jarring and hypocritical for him suddenly to be objecting to this.

It Would Be Nice...

...if reviewers actually tested the special features on expensive equipment instead of blowing them off with a dismissive comment. That's a statement that applies to *most* TV reviews and many other reviews in quite a few magazines. Oh, sure, space is at a premium, but some of these reviews have loads of irrelevant blather.

Yes, I get it, True Videophiles don't use automatic optimization or any of that junk—but couldn't reviewers at least mention whether they seem to work well? Some do, and it's appreciated, but more typical is Al Griffin's blowoff when reviewing a \$3,600 Sony XBR-52LX900 HDTV. He *describes* a “wide array of auto-features” (he notes them and what they're supposed to do), then says “As usual, I chose to bypass all such features and headed straight to the Picture Adjustments menu.” He then spends two long paragraphs telling us how much you can tweak picture settings by hand. Would some of the automatic features help those of us who aren't full-time tweakers? Whoops: Reading the wrong magazine, apparently.

Comparing Potatoes and Truffles

Remember *Wired Magazine's* absurd “The Web is dead” cover article (September 2010)?

I can't think of anything that was right about the article. One of the things that was most wrong was the big graph that showed how the web was dying—by plotting all internet traffic, in bytes, on a market-share graph (that is, one where the Y axis is always filled, since it goes up to 100% and the segments show percentage of each area over time).

One thing that was wrong with it is that this kind of graph is almost always misleading or meaningless when an overall space is either growing or shrinking, since it represents percentages, not absolutes. If Amazon goes from selling 90% of ebooks when ebook sales are \$1 million per year to selling 30% of ebooks when ebook sales are \$1 billion per year, I can assure you nobody at Amazon is saying “Damn. We've died in the ebook space.” But that's what a market-share graph would show: A dramatic, awful, terrible decline in Amazon ebook sales.

The other is even more absurd, and is where I get “potatoes and truffles.” Well, you know, they're both edibles that come from the ground, so clearly truffles are dead, since the weight of potatoes sold

each year must surpass the weight of truffles by several orders of magnitude. Actually, they're both tubers, so what's the difference? ("Several orders of magnitude": I can't readily find the current total production/sale of truffles, but it apparently peaked at "several hundred tonnes" early in the last century, so I'd guess it's no more than, say, 314 tonnes now. Which is a deliberate choice because 2008 worldwide production of potatoes was 314 million tones. So figure at least a million times as many potatoes, by weight. And there's even the time element, since truffle production has dropped enormously while potato production continues to rise.)

The other fallacy? Choosing one measurement and assuming that it's meaningful in other contexts. In this case, choosing data volume (bits or bytes) and assuming it relates somehow to "where people spend their time."

I choose that quotation because here's how *Wired* responded to the criticisms of their chart-junk in this case:

While not perfect, traffic volume is a decent proxy for where people spend their time.

Bullshit.

Last Saturday, we had a friend over and spent a wonderful two hours and 31 minutes watching the glorious Blu-ray version of *The Music Man*. I felt as though I'd never really seen the picture before. It was great. It was also 2.5 hours. I'm guessing *The Music Man* probably took up around 40GB (a dual-layer Blu-ray Disk has 50GB capacity).

Today, I'll start reading a mystery novel that I'm certain is going to be enormously entertaining as well. At 250 pages, the text in it would probably occupy about 80,000 bytes, maybe less.

By *Wired's* "reasoning," it's a fair approximation to say I should spend around 0.018 seconds reading that book, since it has only one-five hundred thousandths as much data as *The Music Man*—and "traffic volume is a decent proxy for where people spend their time."

In the real world, I'll probably spend three or four hours reading the novel, maybe a little longer.

An extreme case?

OK, so a Blu-ray Disc is an extreme case. Internet traffic almost never includes 30mb/s streams, which is roughly BD level. But it does include loads of video, probably at traffic rates between 250kb/s and 6mb/s, and audio, at traffic rates of at least 64kb/s

for anything with halfway decent sound ("halfway decent" is the operative term here).

So if I watch a one-minute YouTube clip, it's likely that the traffic amounts to at least 1.9 megabytes (at the lowest datarate supported by YouTube) and more likely at least twice that much.

How much time would it take me to read 1.9 megabytes worth of text, even with HTML/XML overhead? Without overhead, that's 300,000 words or three long books. With PDF overhead (which, for embedded typefaces, is more than HTML overhead), that's four typical issues of *Cites & Insights*—but for the text itself (with Word overhead), it's at least a year of *C&I*. I pretty much guarantee that anybody who reads *C&I* at all spends more than a minute doing so, even though the data traffic only amounts to a few seconds worth of YouTube.

Equating "traffic" for text, or even still photos, with "traffic" for sound or video, as being in any way meaningful in terms of time spent is just nonsense. *Wired* says "We stand by the chart." That says a lot about *Wired*—and almost nothing about the present or future of the web.

the book: terms of service

That's the title (and orthography) of a September 9, 2009 post at *library ad infinitum*, and it's cute (although it also feels familiar): A ToS for print books. It's at mbattles.posterous.com/the-book-terms-of-service if you're having trouble finding it. Go read the original; it's not long and doesn't excerpt well.

Psycho-Acoustic Modeling

You might remember this from November 2009. BlueBeat.com was selling "remastered" Beatles tracks for \$0.25 each, a year before Apple (the music company) finally agreed to allow legal downloads of Beatles tracks by Apple (the consumer electronics company). Did BlueBeat have a license to sell these downloads? No, and it claimed it didn't need one—because the songs on BlueBeat are "totally new recordings." Here's how founder Hank Risan defended that claim (as quoted from a November 19, 2009 *ars technica* piece by Nate Anderson):

Every musical sound in a sound recording has a point of origin, called a source point, as well as a capture point, where the sound is affixed. To create "pure sound" simulations, I purchased CD's of sound recordings over the counter. I made one

ephemeral [sic] copy of each recording, as authorized by section 112 [of the copyright act], destroying same shortly after the simulations were created. The original sounds were partitioned into segments for observation.

These segments were analyzed by artistic operators who, employing principles of psychoacoustics and advanced harmonic analysis, synthesized an independent parametric model of the sounds. A firewall was utilized to preserve independence between the sounds of the model and those of the original recording. I destroyed the ephemeral recording. Positing assumptions as to the location of the microphone and spacial relationship to the voice and instruments involved in a given recorded performance, the artistic operator then generated and fixed new sounds by selecting new capture points and new source points in a new virtual three dimensional computer-staged environment. The simulation, thus created, contained new and original spherical source point waves.

Risan is claiming that these “simulations” are new performances of the same songs, and that he owns copyright on the new performances. The plaintiffs called this “technobabble and doublespeak,” and submitted testimony from EMI’s head of technology, who testified that the BlueBeat files were copies of Beatles recordings “with only minor technical variations consistent with the process by which recordings are compressed into digital MP3 files.” The head conducted A/B listening tests and found no differences—and also did phase-reversal tests, which can dramatically demonstrate acoustic similarity.

Risan countered by submitting *binary printouts* of one-second clips from the original and the BlueBeat version, showing that they’re different—as they would be once compressed and filtered.

The judge did the unthinkable: *Listened* to the BlueBeat tracks and the CDs. The judge “was unable to detect or discern any meaningful difference” between the two—and, since Rihan *admitted* that there were no actual new performances involved, it wouldn’t have mattered if he had. You can’t apply a filter or a compression technique to an existing song and turn it into a separately-copyrightable original work. You don’t have to be a copyright extremist to call that infringement—*especially* since BlueBeat was selling the tracks as being by The Beatles, which you can’t do if you’re selling cover versions. BlueBeat is probably gone—at least as a seller of “modeled” music (although the site remains as a place to share playlists, which may or may not have its own copy-

right issues. The site still claims to “transmit simulated live musical performances”).

Why Isn’t There a Better Way to Text While Driving?

You *know* that isn’t my question; it heads a Joel Johnson post on August 21, 2010 at *Wired.com*. And it starts with one of those wonderful phony universalisms that make *Wired* such a delight to read, this time with an *explicit* “all” after the “we.” The first nine words and three sentences:

It’s deadly. It’s irresponsible. And we’ve all done it. No, you jackass, we damn well have *not* “all done it.” I can guarantee you that there are tens of millions of us who have never texted while driving and with any luck never will. The fact that you’re an irresponsible jerk willing to risk your life and those around you because *you’re so damn important* that you have to be in constant communication—well, sorry, but that doesn’t mean everybody else is similarly irresponsible.

Where can you go with a story that starts off with such an attitude? Nowhere but down, I guess. He mentions that a “celebrity plastic surgeon” drove his car off a cliff while tweeting about his dog and admits that texting is even more dangerous than other driving distractions—but *he does it* and assumes everybody else does. He “had to do it” because, you know, pulling over would suggest a lack of total entitlement. “I could have pulled over each time. But who does that really?”

He says he’s going to do better, now that he realizes there really isn’t a better way. Why do I not believe him? And *why would Wired run something like this?*

Masthead

Cites & Insights: Crawford at Large, Volume 11, Number 1, Whole # 136, ISSN 1534-0937, a journal of libraries, policy, technology and media, is written and produced by Walt Crawford.

Comments should be sent to waltcrawford@gmail.com.
Cites & Insights: Crawford at Large is copyright © 2011 by Walt Crawford: Some rights reserved.

All original material in this work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/1.0> or send a letter to Creative Commons, 559 Nathan Abbott Way, Stanford, California 94305, USA.

URL: citesandinsights.info/civ111.pdf