

# Cites & Insights

Crawford at Large

Libraries • Policy • Technology • Media

Volume 19, Number 9: The Final Issue

ISSN 1534-0937

## The Front

### The Final Issue

Nineteen volumes (and one extra issue). Two hundred twenty-seven issues. Almost exactly 6,510 pages. Just over 4.5 million words. Around twenty linear inches of bookshelf for the paperback volumes (including the one for this volume, to emerge sometime in 2020—but also including volumes 1-5, which are Velobound and not available as paperbacks).

That's *Cites & Insights* in a nutshell.

Those figures are clear. So are individual issue and volume sizes:

- The wordiest volume was volume 9 (2009), with 331,031 words; least wordy (it's never quite clear how tables count) was volume 17 (2017).
- Highest page count was volume 18, with 439 pages—but those are 6x9" pages. Fewest pages: volume 16 (2016), with 209 pages.

### Inside This Issue

Nostalgia ..... 8

- The wordiest *issue* was December 2015 (15:12), with 48,012 words entirely devoted to Ethics and Access, just beating out August 2012 (12:7): 47,557 words devoted to "It Was Never a Universal Library: Three Years of the Google Book Settlement."
- The longest issue in the 8.5"x11" era was September/October 2010 (10:10), 60 pages, "But Still They Blog: The Liblog Landscape 2007-2009." In the 6"x9" era, longest was June 2017 (17:5), an 84-page issue most of which was the Subject Supplement to *GOAJ2*.
- Shortest and fewest words? November/December 2016 (16:9), two pages and 1,342 words devoted to the format change in 2017. Realistically, though, September 2017 (17:8), twelve 6"x9" pages constituting 4,954 words.

## Popularity?

Things get trickier here. *C&I* has had more than one home and different ways of providing statistics. And, frankly, I don't entirely trust that the current download figures are *people* downloading issues: I sense that there may be various robots, although the statistics package is supposed to ignore those.

For the years before 2007, I no longer have counts that make much sense, although there were theoretically some 585,000 visitors and 486,000 pageviews from December 18, 2002 through May 23, 2007 (the period when *C&I* was hosted at Boise State). No sense at all of the most active issues during that period.

It *appears* that for the period from May 2007 through the end of 2012, I do have article-level figures but no totals. *By far* the most widely-read, and probably the essay with the most impact on the library field, was the 32-page full-issue essay that made up issue 6:2 (Midwinter 2006): "Library 2.0 and 'Library 2.0'." My figures show more than 55,000 combined article and issue downloads. My printed summary, all I have left from that period, is of little use beyond that.

My current spreadsheet, based on last-day-of-month monthly figures, has two pages that appear to be relevant: "through15"—presumably 2013-2015, unless it covers more than that—and "current," which I believe covers 2016-2019. Neither includes article-level access, which I didn't provide after 2012.

For 2013-2015, the hottest issue was April 2014 (14:4), with 19,608 supposed downloads, and I'm sure that's right: the lead essay was "Ethics and Access 1: The Sad Case of Jeffrey Beall." Second was July 2014 (14:7), "Journals, 'Journals,' and Wannabes; Investigating the List," with 10,352 downloads. I show a total of 616,822 downloads during that period, which may or may not be real.

For the current period—which may include parts of 2013-2015—the top issues are still 14:4 (23,581 downloads) and 14:7 (13,989 downloads)—with August 2010 (10:8) third at 10,758, with no obvious essay as a reason (five essays, the longest on Facebook). I see a total of 824,302 downloads, but I doubt that figure—especially since this year's figure (through November) is only 57,357, and even that may be too high.

I'm pretty sure readership is trending downward—although that's not the only reason I'm shutting down this too-long experiment.

As for too-long: 19 years ignores the somewhat-similar if much briefer things that appeared in *Library Hi Tech News*: "Trailing Edge Notes," the last five pages of nine issues in 1995, ten issues in 1996, ten issues in 1997; and "Crawford's Corner," typically eight to ten pages in ten issues in 1998, ten issues in 1999, and ten issues in 2000. So the silliness really goes back 24 years and 286 issues.

Speaking of payment, I want to acknowledge the folks who donated to *Cites & Insights* and especially YBP Book Services, which sponsored *C&I* from 2005 through 2009.

## The Long Essays

Finally, I'd like to note other very long essays—some of which may have had some impact, others not.

As to overall impact, especially recently, most of my recent efforts have been in the area of open access—including, of course, the SPARC-sponsored *Gold Open Access* series. One gauge of my centrality in OA is that, with one hypothetical exception in Nigeria, I have *never* been asked to speak at any of the burgeoning number of OA conferences. (The only time I've spoken on OA, as far as I can tell, was a half-day preconference at the 2013 Oregon Library Association/Washington Library Association Joint Conference, one of three speeches I did at that conference.) This does not surprise me, and I'm not fishing for an invitation: given the difficulties of travel, I'd probably decline an invitation anyway. Still, for all that I'm providing unique sets of fully-researched facts, I'm at best a fringe part of OA. Such is life. And, of course, I'm old...

Now to that list, in chronological order, noting that these are *not* all full-issue essays:

## The List

### 2003-2005

Midsummer 2003 - v. 3 no. 9, 20 pages

Coping with CIPA: A Censorware Special

Midwinter 2004 - v. 4 no. 2, 20 pages

A is for AAC: A Discursive Glossary

April 2004 - v. 4 no. 5, 20 pages

The Broadcast Flag and Why You Should Care

Mid-June 2004 - v. 4 no. 8, 20 pages

Copyright Currents: Catching Up with Copyrights

### 2006-2008

Mid-Fall 2005 - v. 5 no. 13, 20 pages

Perspective: Library Futures, Media Futures

Midwinter 2006 v. 6 no. 2 - 32 pages

Library 2.0 and "Library 2.0"

July 2006 v. 6 no. 9 - 26 pages

Perspective: Finding a Balance: Libraries and Librarians

August 2006 v. 6 no. 10 - 30 pages

Perspective: Looking at Liblogs: The Great Middle

Mid-June 2007, COAP2 v. 7 no. 7 - 44 pages  
Cites on a Plane 2: This Time It's for Keeps  
January 2008 v. 8 no. 1 - 30 pages  
Perspective: Discovering Books: OCA & GBS Retrospective

## 2009

Midwinter 2009 v. 9 no. 2 - 34 pages  
A was for AAC: A Discursive Glossary, Rethought and Expanded  
March 2009 v. 9 no. 4 - 30 pages  
Perspective: The Google Books Search Settlement  
June 2009 v. 9 no. 7 - 48 pages  
The Liblog Landscape 2007-2008: A Lateral Look  
November 2009 v. 9 no. 12 - 34 pages  
Library Access to Scholarship  
December 2009 v. 9 no. 13 - 32 pages  
Making it Work: Purpose, Values and All That Jazz

## 2010

January 2010 v. 10 no. 1 - 30 pages  
Making it Work Perspective: Thinking About Blogging 4  
March 2010 v. 10 no. 3 - 26 pages  
Making it Work: Philosophy and Future  
Spring 2010 v. 10 no. 5 - 30 pages  
The Zeitgeist: hypePad and buzzkill  
May 2010 v. 10 no. 6 - 32 pages  
Old Media/New Media  
June 2010 v. 10 no. 7 - 34 pages  
The Zeitgeist: There is No Future  
July 2010 v. 10 no. 8 - 40 pages  
The Zeitgeist: One Facebook to Rule Them All?  
September/October 2010 v. 10 no. 10 - 60 pages  
But Still They Blog: The Liblog Landscape 2007-2009

## 2011

February 2011 v. 11 no. 2 - 28 pages  
Making it Work Perspective: Five Years Later: Library 2.0 and Balance  
March 2011 v. 11 no. 3 - 32 pages  
Making it Work Perspective: Five Years Later: Library 2.0 and Balance  
(cont.)  
April 2011 v. 11 no. 4 - 32 pages  
Perspective: Writing about Reading  
May 2011 v. 11 no. 5 - 44 pages  
Perspective: Writing about Reading (continued)  
The Zeitgeist: 26 is Not the Problem

September 2011 v. 11 no. 8 - 32 pages  
Writing about Reading: A Future of Books and Publishing

## 2012

August 2012 v. 12 no. 7 - 58 pages  
It Was Never a Universal Library: Three Years of the Google Book Settlement

September 2012 v. 12 no. 8 - 36 pages  
Words: Thinking About Blogging, Part 1

October 2012 v. 12 no. 9 - 24 pages  
Words: Thinking About Blogging, Part 2

November 2012 v. 12 no. 10 - 32 pages  
Libraries: Give Us a Dollar and We'll Give You Back Four (2012-13):  
Commentary, Part 1

Fall 2012 v. 12 no. 11 - 20 pages  
Libraries: Give Us a Dollar and We'll Give You Back Four (2012-13):  
Commentary, Part 2

December 2012 v. 12 no. 12 - 38 pages  
Policy: The Rapid Rout of RWA  
Libraries: Walking Away: Courage and Acquisitions

## 2013

January 2013 v. 13 no. 1 - 40 pages  
Intersections: Catching Up with Open Access 1

February 2013 v. 13 no. 2 - 40 pages  
Intersections: Catching Up with Open Access 2

May 2013 v. 13 no. 5 - 28 pages  
Libraries: The Mythical Average Public Library

June 2013 v. 13 no. 6 - 42 pages  
Intersections: Hot Times for Open Access

October 2013 v. 13 no. 10 - 48 pages  
The Front: Books, Books and (Books?)

November 2013 v. 13 no. 11 - 36 pages  
Words: The Ebook Marketplace

December 2013 v. 13 no. 12 - 34 pages  
Words: The Ebook Marketplace, Part 2

## 2014

January 2014 v. 14 no. 1 - 32 pages  
Words: Books, E and P

February 2014 v. 14 no. 2 - 42 pages  
Libraries: Ebooks and Libraries

March 2014 v. 14 no. 3 - 32 pages  
Media: Thinking about Magazines

April 2014 v. 14 no. 4 - 22 pages  
Intersections: Ethics and Access 1: The Sad Case of Jeffrey Beall  
May 2014 v. 14 no. 5 - 34 pages  
Intersections: Ethics and Access 2: The So-Called Sting  
July 2014 v. 14 no. 7 - 24 pages  
Intersections: Journals, “Journals” and Wannabes: Investigating the Lists  
August 2014 v. 14 no. 8 - 32 pages  
Words: Doing It Yourself  
Intersections: Access and Ethics 3  
September 2014 v. 14 no. 9 - 18 pages  
Intersections: Some Notes on Elsevier  
October/November 2014 v. 14 no. 10 - 24 pages  
Intersections: Journals and “Journals”: Taking a Deeper Look  
December 2014 v. 14 no. 11 - 34 pages  
Intersections: Journals and “Journals”: Taking a Deeper Look: Part 2: DOAJ Subset and Additional Notes

## 2015

January 2015 v. 15 no. 1 - 28 pages  
Intersections: The Third Half  
March 2015 v. 15 no. 3 - 24 pages  
Words: Books, E and P, 2014  
April 2015 v. 15 no. 4 - 38 pages  
Intersections: The Economics of Open Access  
June 2015 v. 15 no. 6 - 24 pages  
Intersections: Who Needs Open Access, Anyway?  
October 2015 v. 15 no. 9 - 36 pages -  
Intersections: The Gold OA Landscape 2011-2014  
November 2015 v. 15 no. 10 - 38 pages -  
Policy: Google Books: The Neverending Story?  
December 2015 v. 15 no. 11 - 58 pages -  
Intersections: Ethics and Access 2015

## 2016

February-March 2016 v. 16 no. 2 - 46 pages -  
Intersections: Economics and Access 1-46  
August 2016 v. 16 no. 7 - 22 pages  
Words: Catching Up with Books, E and P  
Sept/Oct 2016 v. 16 no. 8 - 24 pages  
Intersections: Ethics and Access

## 2017

January 2017 v. 17 no. 1

Gray OA 2012-2016: Open Access Journals Beyond DOAJ  
April 2017 v. 17 no. 3  
Intersections: The Art of the Beall  
June 2017 v. 17 no. 5 - 84 pages  
Intersections: Subject Supplement to GOAJ2  
July 2017 v. 17 no. 6 - 60 pages  
Intersections: Economics and Access 2017  
October 2017 v. 17 no. 9 - 42 pages  
Gray OA 2014-2017: A Partial Followup  
November 2017 v. 17 no. 10 - 36 pages  
Intersections: Gray Portraits

## 2018

January 2018 v. 18 no. 1 - 48 pages  
Intersections: Open Access Issues  
April 2018 v. 18 no. 2 - 44 pages  
Words: Writing, Publishing and Stuff  
July 2018 v. 18 no. 4 - 76 pages  
Subject Supplement to GOAJ3  
September 2018 v. 18 no. 6 - 70 pages  
Intersections: Predator!  
November 2018 v. 18 no. 8 - 40 pages  
Policy: Ethics  
December 2018 v. 18 no. 9 - 36 pages  
Words: Books, Ebooks and Libraries

## 2019

January 2019 v. 19 no. 1 - 42 pages  
Intersections: Open Access Stuff  
June 2019 v. 19 no. 2 - 72 pages  
Intersections: Economics and Access 2019  
July 2019 v. 19 no. 3 - 48 pages  
Policy: A Copyright Miscellany  
August 2019 v. 19 no. 4 - 42 pages  
Intersections: Open Access Issues  
October 2019 v. 19 no. 6 - 39 pages  
Intersections: Peditorials and Other Questionable Items  
November 2019 v. 19 no. 7 - 44 pages  
Intersections: What's the Big Deal?  
December 2019 v. 19 no. 8 - 51 pages  
Intersections: Open Access Issues

## Conclusion

The list above is longer and more varied than I would have expected; I believe there's a lot of good reading there. By now, you really should know that the url is <https://citesandinsights.info/civN1iN2.pdf>, where “N1” is the volume number and “N2” is the issue number.

I *anticipate* retaining the frozen [citesandinsights.info](https://citesandinsights.info) site at least through 2020 and probably through 2021; after that, all bets are off. The OCLC library may still be archiving it, and of course there's the Internet Archive. The caveat in “anticipate”: the site has to be migrated elsewhere by April 2020, and so far I haven't worked up the courage to initiate a site migration (or, for that matter, to choose a new host: Reclaim does not appear to be an option). So, if it disappears...well, I'll try to get it back.

---

## Nostalgia

Here we are, the final essay in the final *Cites & Insights*. Time, perhaps, to engage in a bit of nostalgia—some recent, some older—that seemed worth tagging at the time. Five sections, arranged by frequency of tags (from fewest to most). Significance of the whole thing (and of this whole issue)? Not a whole lot—but it's more meaningful than memes or emoticons.

[In my mind, the young woman in the red dress is married, quite possibly to another woman, and would be appalled by the behavior of the young man. Come on, you know which meme I mean.]

## Predictions

### *They're dead to us: The Ars Technica 2019 Deathwatch*

I've had fun with *ars technica's* “deathwatch” lists before; this one (by multiple staff writers) was posted [January 3, 2019](#). The caveat:

If you're stumbling across Ars' Deathwatch for the first time, this is not a prediction of the actual demise of companies or technologies. It takes a lot to actually erase a company or a technology from the face of the Earth these days. Even the worst ideas and businesses often linger on through inertia or get absorbed by some other company and metastasize in new and horrific ways—for example, Yahoo. (We'll get to them soon enough.)

And this:

To be a candidate for the Deathwatch, a company or product division of a company should have experienced at least one of the following:

- An extended period of lost market share in their particular category



- An extended period of financial losses or a pattern of annual losses
- Serious management, legal, or regulatory problems that raise questions about the business model or long-term strategy of the company or product line

So who's here?

- **Facebook management.** Not FB itself, but its management team (yes, of course that means the Zuck). Unfortunately, this appears to be wrong: Maybe it's because he's given politicians open license to lie, but the Zuck continues.
- **Verizon's AOL/Yahoo Frankenstein:** Which are now called "Oath" corporately—and this sounds about right. I still retain a Yahoo! email address, but only because I can only post to Freecycle from a Yahoo! email. Otherwise, it would be as dead as my AOL email.
- **Snap:** I'm way too old to have ever used SnapChat, but I do know that you can't keep losing money forever.
- **Essential Products:** Who? They make a smartphone that sold for \$700 when it was introduced in 2017, had a dim display and poor camera—and leaked its customers' personal data. That price has come down to \$224.

Essential's next phone—if the company lasts that long—is supposedly "an AI Phone That Texts People for You" according to [Bloomberg](#). That sounds awful.

Oh, and the CEO/founder (an ex-Googler) is/was involved in a [sexual misconduct controversy](#).

- **Goop:** In this case, it's a "Dishonorable mention":

A glop of Goop is circling the drain, ripe for the flush. Gwyneth Paltrow's chic lifestyle and "[contextual commerce](#)" brand is finally in a fatal swirl as its wealthy patrons have smelled the pseudoscience stink and washed their hands of Goop's poppycock "wellness" products and health "modalities." *Swooshhhhhh...*

Just kidding. As much as we'd love to plop Goop on the 2019 Deathwatch, it is still just on our Deathwatch wish list. Goop is, in fact, *thriving*.

Paltrow's Goop has a pungent reputation for peddling foul health claims and products. This includes the dangerous claim that a jade egg (\$66) can improve health when jammed up your vagina and that [a shot of coffee up your keister](#) can "detox" your system (a searing aspresso enema device, the Implant O'Rama, goes for \$135). Paltrow personally

endorsed using bee sting therapy, which doctors [blamed in the death of a healthy 55-year-old woman](#) earlier this year. Then there's the less harmful, but equally nonsensical stickers that Goop says can "rebalance the energy frequency in our bodies."...

## Gengen

As a member of the misnamed "Silent Generation" (you know, the ones who started the Free Speech Movement and played large roles in civil rights activism), it's always amusing to watch the multisided quarrels as to which generation is the worst. All of these are seven to nine years old.

### *Why Gen Y Is Better at Your Job Than You Are*

My first inclination is to treat this Penelope Trunk piece, posted [December 3, 2010](#) at *Moneywatch*, as satire or a joke—but as I read it again, it's pretty clear that Trunk is serious. The first two paragraphs:

Maybe the reason that [young people are optimistic in the face of a poor job market](#) is that young people can probably do your job better than you can.

The truth is, the older set—I'll let you define that—has a bunch of shortcomings when it comes to competing with today's workforce. Management consultant [Stephen Denning](#) has a great little history of management in his new book, [The Leader's Guide to Radical Management](#). He points out that managers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were trained to supervise people to get them to do stuff, to perform tasks. But now that most people are knowledge workers and not semi-skilled workers, we need managers who inspire, motivate, and encourage collaboration—managers, even, who care about the well-being of their employees and strive to make the workplace meaningful. And that's not a corporate world where the older set is generally comfortable.

Later, Trunk tells us young people can "run circles" around older people in productivity, communication, career mobility and resilience... For a brief piece, it's just *loaded* with generalities and condescending tone. (I believe Gen Y is now Millennials.)

I dunno. It still reads like a parody (some links lead to other folks repeating the same generalizations).

### *the perils of generational thinking*

Richard Akerman posted this on [April 5, 2012](#) at *Science Library Pad*, and I find it refreshing. He begins with a silly tweet making a silly claim:

Jian Ghomeshi tweets

Most Gen X-ers know exactly where we were when we heard the news that Kurt Cobain had taken his life 18 years ago today. RIP Kurt.

<http://twitter.com/jianghomeshi/status/187872833613987842>

And proceeds to suggest that Gen X is far too broadly defined and that generalization rarely works:

Jian, who is in my generation, claims Cobain as a generation-shaping experience. I don't give a f\*\*\* about Cobain. I have no idea when he died. It had no impact on me whatsoever. My generational shared experiences are the Challenger Shuttle explosion and 2001-09-11. ...

More generally, it's a solid brief discussion of why gengen works so badly—perhaps especially with regard to “technology expertise.” I won't quote more, except for the closing paragraph:

So we need to be a lot better at separating rapid technology change (Google launched in 1998-1999, Facebook launched in 2004, the iPhone as mentioned just in 2007) with generational attributes. Someone in Gen X can use a smartphone. Someone in the Millennial generation may have no skill with the iPad. It's a lot more about individual attitudes and experiences than some vast cultural changes. Almost no one has a computer science background, even as coding abilities rise in importance for journalism and for civil society. We should be thinking about the implications of technology change, and thinking about the kind of work environments we want to create, not assuming a wave of generational change will come in and create some sort of instant collaborative high-tech utopia. We need to plan and create the future we want.

### *Generation X Is Sick of Your Bullshit*

I'll close with this Mat Honan piece on [October 18, 2011](#) at *Gizmodo*—which might be summarized as a gen-reversed version of “OK, Millennials.” Probably as useful as “OK Boomers” as well.

Loads of comments. (Nearly 500.) Didn't read them all.

One excerpt may set the tone:

Generation X is a journeyman. It didn't invent hip hop, or punk rock, or even electronica (it's pretty sure those dudes in Kraftwerk are boomers) but it perfected all of them, and made them its own. It didn't invent the Web, but it largely built the damn thing. Generation X gave you Google and Twitter and blogging; Run DMC and Radiohead and Nirvana and Notorious B.I.G. Not that it gets any credit.

## Failure

After the heartwarming topic of gengen, let's move the sunny focus to failure... except that some of these, largely library- or librarian-related, really are considerably more encouraging, about *learning* from “failure.” Mostly eight or nine years old. Going through them at this remove, I'm finding that some now feel like blather or repetition. But not all...

## Well, that went poorly

This post by Iris Jastram appeared [October 28, 2010](#) at *Pegasus Librarian*. As with several others in this section, this is a librarian I admire (and like).

This week, the lunch session put on by the Learning and Teaching Center was called [Harvesting Our Mistakes](#), and featured frank discussions about courses or parts of courses that had gone wrong, and what the faculty had learned from that. Some learned that even when it's a bit artificial, there needs to be some coherent thread to a course (the lower the level, the more coherent the thread). Others talked about developing the confidence to make mistakes boldly and in public so that their students could participate in fixing the mistakes and also see that mistakes happen. Many agreed that it takes 3 tries to get a course right: the first time being a grand experiment, the second time overcompensating for the first time's mistakes, and the third time settling into the right groove. And most people talked about how they exert far greater control over their classes (plan more, talk more, and generally bulldoze information into their students more) when they're having a bad day, and how it's a lot easier to go with the flow on a good day. Boy do I ever have that experience!

Well, I had a class go pretty poorly the day before sitting in on this discussion, so I was right there with the group. I was ready for the self-flagellation. I was ready for the moaning and gnashing of teeth. There were a couple of people who were talking about mistakes being good for students, but I figured I could safely skip over those comments as they weren't really on topic. My topic. My Class Had Failed — I Had Failed. That was the topic.

Jastram considers why she took failure so hard and a fair amount more, including this:

But as it turns out, there are a couple of useful things I've learned from this and similar experiences. For one thing, I've learned that I really should *always* have the talk I've had with a few professors so far, saying up front that this is the first iteration of the class, and that afterward we should talk about what worked and what didn't so that the next time we work together things go better. I don't know quite why I get shy about that talk, but it always makes things go better.

There's more; still relevant and worth reading.

## *Librarians Are Experts In Failing*

This brief post by Andy Burkhardt on [March 8, 2010](#) at his blog still reads well and makes sense. He begins with a classic Thomas Edison quote:

*"I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work."*

The post is only four paragraphs, and I don't see a CC license; I'll quote the first and third paragraphs.

Research is an exercise in failure. You try a search in Google, or the catalog, or a database and often you don't find what you're looking for right away. You then try something else and perhaps get a little closer. Each time you try a search though, you learn a little more. You find new useful keywords to try in your next search. You learn what doesn't work or what kind of works.

Failure is necessary to succeed. It's what allows us to learn. We should take the same approach in our careers that we do with our research and see failure as a tool... a necessary means to an end. Failure means you're trying. It's nice and safe to perpetuate the status quo. You won't fail doing that. But you also won't grow, and the library will stagnate.

Go to the original for the other half and the comments (worth reading).

### *Respecting failure: Some thoughts, and a proposal*

This post, by John Mark Ockerbloom on [December 1, 2009](#) at *Everybody's Libraries*, is very old—but still relevant. Key portions:

[Failure] a topic we often feel uncomfortable discussing, especially when we had a hand in whatever failed. Part of the discomfort in the digital library community has to do with the dual nature of what many of us do: We manage programs and services, and we also try to innovate. As managers, we don't want our programs to fail. (If that happens anyway, we'd at least like to avoid being blamed for the failure.) And libraries have long-term ongoing service and preservation obligations that make certain kinds of catastrophic failure unacceptable.

But as innovators, we want to be open to failure as a way of learning. [“Fail faster!”](#) is a common slogan of innovative labs and ventures, and knowing the “thousands of ways that don't work” (part of a quote often attributed to [Thomas Edison](#)) help us better understand the ways that do. I've [mentioned before](#) that my most widely-cited paper was written about the failure of a software development project I helped work on. And a new scientific theory isn't usually worth considering until it is capable of failure— that is, it makes definite predictions that subsequent observations can either confirm or refute.

If we are really serious about innovating, we need to respect failure, and leave room for it. We need to let people try things that might not work, allow time for encountering dead ends, have contingency plans that let us continue to carry out our missions even as failures occur, and note both what worked and what didn't in the things we try. It's especially useful to note things that we found didn't work before they were obvious to others, since we might well save others a lot of time avoiding the same pitfalls.

Ockerbloom asked people to email him failure reports; he'd do his best to anonymize them and post some on his blog. It was a good idea. I don't believe much actually happened—it's just too easy to ignore the failure as much as possible, at the cost of more people being able to learn from it.

### *Scrap it*

We'll close this section from Jenica Rogers' [August 22, 2011](#) post at *Attempting Elegance*—and, since it's brief, well-written, and makes good points, I'm going to quote the whole thing (despite the lack of a visible CC license, I know Rogers is generally happy to share her posts).

I just tried to write a post I've had floating around in my head about librarians as the social workers of the information economy. When I started writing, though, I found the comparison hard to justify, in that I felt like I was trivializing social work in order to make a point about librarians. It just wasn't working. So I scrapped it. They were elegantly arranged words that I'd spent some time on, but they were just bad, when I looked at them with a critical eye.

It felt good to click “move to trash”.

There's freedom in being able to declare that something isn't working, and so we'll move on now. This morning was our staff retreat here at Potsdam's College Libraries, and I said that the interim system of meetings and communication that we've been operating under during the implementation of our re-org isn't working — the Outreach Team is too big, communication has gotten muddied, and my informal approach to meetings has led to information gaps developing. So we need to change things. Move this system to the trash, and try something else. There's no clear answer about what the new thing should be, but we had a good discussion that gives me lots of metaphorical modeling clay to work with. Throw out the old, dust off my hands and dig into a new pile of clay, and start molding.

It makes it easier to make decisions when you know that you can start again later. Our website redesign calendar includes “see how 1.0 worked out, begin working on 1.5”, we implemented last spring's changes to our borrowing policies knowing that we could fix things this summer if they were to prove seriously broken, and our Bylaws Working Group is trying to streamline our bylaws so that we can make needed organizational changes on the fly with less complexity of process. The lesson? Facilitating change and innovation is easy if you're willing to tolerate failure. That ability to openly tolerate failure and circular progress and some uncertainty is key if you want to operate this way, but let me ask you: what organization doesn't already have failure and circular progress and uncertainty? Let's just admit they exist, proclaim that we're not perfect, and begin doing business as though we're not ashamed of being human.

I mean, maybe the next thing won't work either, but we'll keep trying until something does, and isn't that what life's really like?

Excellent.

## Blogging

It may never regain the pre-Twitter heights, but lots of people still blog...and sometimes say things *about* blogging that still seem noteworthy.

*Where have all the bloggers gone?*

That title, on Jon Udell's [August 10, 2012](#) post at his eponymous blog, says a lot in and of itself: even in 2012, the glory days of blogging had passed. (Looking at my personal bookshelf, I see that my three semi-comprehensive studies of liblogs—blogs by and about libraries and librarians—began in 2007 and ended in 2010.)

Udell's keying off Dave Shields' [August 6, 2012](#) post of the same name. Shields' title in turn was inspired by a Kingston Trio song, and most of you are probably too young to even remember that group... Also, Shields did something remarkable: from August 2009 to June 2012, he refrained from social media and blogs entirely!

Shields points to a particular "planet" (remember blog planets? honestly, I don't—they are/were auto-aggregations of posts) and notes:

Now that I'm back blogging, I have found that if I write a post in the morning, and then write another later in the day, or the next morning, then there are only a handful of blog posts from all the other members of the planet in between.

This particular planet had hundreds of bloggers, many well-known within the particular community. And now?

The one thing I can state with absolute certainty — assuming Sam is no slouch, and he isn't — is that \*none\* of these folks are blogging on a regular basis.

For example, if the last day I have put out more blog posts than the Apache Foundation. The Apache Foundation has its own blog, representing the views of scores of Apache contributors, yet it only posts every two weeks or so.

Shields finds this unfortunate, and concludes:

So if you see a blogger, give them a shake of the hand, a pat on the back, and thank them for their service on behalf of a lost art.

That art would be writing, or least writing more than 140 characters at a time.

Going back to Udell: He shows a graph revealing that his own blogging declined from 2007 on, starting with more than 250 posts in 2007...and

declining to fewer than 50 in 2011. He gives figures for his wife's (entirely different) blog as well—and after a peak of 110+ in 2008, she's down to fewer than 60 in 2011.

Perhaps a more interesting question than “Where have the bloggers gone?” is “What were they doing in the first place?” In my case, from [2003 through 2006](#), blogging was part of my gig at InfoWorld. For many of the others listed at [planet.intertwingly.com](#) it was a professional activity too. Collectively we were the tech industry thinking out loud. We spoke to one another through our blogs, and we monitored our RSS readers closely. That doesn't happen these days.

Obviously Twitter, Facebook, and (for geeks particularly) Google+ have captured much of that conversational energy. Twitter is especially seductive. Architecturally it's the same kind of pub/sub network as the RSS-mediated blogosphere. But its 140-character data packets radically lowered the threshold for interaction.

It's not just about short-form versus long-form, though. Facebook and Google+ are now hosting conversations that would formerly have happened on — or across — blogs. Keystrokes that would have been routed to our personal clouds are instead landing in those other clouds.

Remember Google+? It captured a lot of geeks and OA people...but never enough to retain Google's interest.

There's more here. Still relevant.

My own activity—at least at the current iteration of *Walt at Random*? I started fairly early and was fairly active for a long time. Here are the numbers:

- 2005: 207 posts; 2006: 239 posts; 2007: 204 posts; 2008: 226 posts; 2009: 199 posts; 2010: 218 posts; 2011: 174 posts; 2012: 189 posts; 2013: 234 posts; 2014: 72 posts; 2015: 129 posts; 2016: 59 posts; 2017: 51 posts; 2018: 51 posts.; 2019: 51 posts (as of December 24).

OK, so I'm an outlier—never a truly frequent blogger, and roughly steady-state through 2013, dropping sharply since then. What happened in 2014? You could start with [“Journals, ‘Journals’ and Wannabes”](#) and three followup essays that year: 2014 was when I read the claims of Huge Numbers of Predatory Journals, got an “oh bullshit” sense at the back of my mind, and started investigating—and, migrating to gold OA, haven't stopped since.

So much for me. Back to other folks.

*Commenting threads: good, bad, or not at all.*

This lengthy post, by Bora Zivkovic on [January 28, 2013](#) at *A Blog Around The Clock*, is one of the most thorough discussions of *why* comments on



blogs need some form of moderation and several suggestions as to *how* to moderate comments.

It is long and worth reading in the original—including commentary on why free speech has nothing to do with blog comments—but here’s a fascinating intro:

A couple of weeks ago, an [article was published in Science](#) about [online science communication](#) (nothing new there, really, that we have not known for a decade, but academia is slow to catch up). But what was [interesting in it](#), and [what everyone](#) else [jumped on](#), was a brief mention of a conference presentation that will be published soon in a journal. It is about the effect of the tone of comments on the response of other readers to the article on which the comments appear.

I have contacted the authors and have received and read a draft of that paper. Since it is not published yet, I will not break all sorts of embargoes by going into details, but can re-state what is already out there. An article about nanotechnology, a topic most people know very little about and usually have no *a priori* biases for or against, was presented to the test subjects. Half the people saw the article with (invented) polite, civil and constructive comments. The other half was given the same article but with uncivil comments - essentially a flame-war in the fake commenting thread. The result is that readers of the second version quickly developed affinity for one side of the argument and strongly took that side, which affected the way they understood and trusted the original article (text of which was unaltered). The nasty comment thread polarized the opinion of readers, leading them to misunderstand the original article...

Read the post. It’s as relevant now as it was in 2013. I continually marvel at how John Scalzi—a controversial figure to many sad puppies in the SFF community and a man not afraid to state his opinions—manages to get such good comment threads. Part of it is, I suspect, blocking; much of it is his making clear that he will “mallet” comments that are out of line, and doing just that.

### *The blog is dead, long live the blog*

I suppose I should properly discuss this post, by Jason Kottke sometime in [December 2013](#) at [NiemanLab](#) (odd that a journalism site doesn’t show dates on stories/posts, but never mind), but I won’t.

Why not? Partly that dreary “X is dead, long live X” title—followed by this lede:

Sometime in the past few years, the blog died. In 2014, people will finally notice. Sure, blogs still exist, many of them are excellent, and they will go on existing and being excellent for many years to come. But the function of the blog, the nebulous informational task **we all agreed** the

blog was fulfilling for the past decade, is increasingly being handled by a growing number of disparate media forms that are blog-like but also decidedly not blogs. [Emphasis added.]

Unless “we all” refers to the many entities within Kottke’s ego, that’s just bullshit—and doesn’t make me want to read further. Your tolerance for high-profile bullshit may be different.

No, I’ve never cared for kottke.org. My bad?

### *The Death of the Blog, Again, Again*

On the other hand, Kottke’s post engendered this post, by John Scalzi on [December 19, 2013](#) at *Whatever*, and Scalzi is, as usual, thoughtful and worth reading. He says Kottke’s not wrong *in general*—but of course many blogs do just fine (six years later, *Whatever*’s still running and drawing an audience that may be down from 7.5 million visits in 2013 but is probably still quite large).

As to the wording that turned me off, Scalzi doesn’t address it directly but does say:

This doesn’t mean the blog format is actually dead. It does mean that its centrality to online life is substantially diminished. **Mind you, this assumes that it actually ever was central, which is somewhat debatable**— first there was AOL, then there was online chat, then MySpace and then Facebook/Twitter, along with Snapchat, Tumblr and all other manner of services and spaces, all of which, again, have been better tuned to the person who just wants to be online to see what friends are up to, and announce to the world what’s on the menu for lunch. [Emphasis added.]

There’s a *lot* more here, all of it worthwhile. Scalzi believes that many people who were best known as bloggers are off doing other things and that “aggregate presence online” may be more important now (Scalzi’s *very* active on Twitter, and I should be more active there).

The close:

So, yes. I suspect I and *Whatever* will continue on even after this latest death of the blog. At least until writing it stops being fun for me and/or I decide to just stop writing. Short of no longer drawing breath, I don’t see either of those as very likely.

Four dozen comments. Also worth reading. One gem:

What it means for something to be “dead” in pop culture is that there is no longer so much mindless momentum associated with the area that any well-capitalized idiot can double their money in it.

And that’s it—four of (I think) 20 tagged items that seemed worth revisiting, and one of the four only to make fun of.

## Libraries and Librarians

I used to say that I wasn't a professional librarian (my wife is), but I was a library professional. I'll stick with that. These items, if they survive, go back as far as 2010. I find that I'm dropping items that aren't clearly signed—where you have to click more than once to find a name. Maybe they're no longer standing behind their old opinions; certainly they're different people now.

Going through these, I see quite a few are about “professionalism” and the desirability (or not) of clearly separating Librarians (those with ML[I]S's) from Other People Who Work In Libraries (whether denigrated as “paraprofessionals” or otherwise). I've included one or two, but it's a discussion I was always uneasy with (and why not, since I don't have The Degree and yet was an ALA division president and published groundbreaking books in the field), and one that's colored my view of some library bloggers and others for some time. So I won't include too many of those. [There's also the exceedingly tiresome discussion of whether librarianship is a profession at all, and to protect people who may have grown up since then, I'll scrap those altogether.] But I will start with one...

### *Response to “The Master's Degree Misperception”*

Emily Lloyd posted this on [September 3, 2010](#) at *Shelf Check*—and it is, to be sure, a response to an Andy Woodworth post, one I apparently never discussed.

It is exceptionally rare that I get offended enough by a librar\* blog post to respond to it with more than pulling a coworker over and saying, “Get a load of this,” but Andy Woodworth's [The Master's Degree Misperception](#) at Agnostic, Maybe, got--as we used to say in high school--on my tits. Read it, but here are two excerpts:

*On any given day, I can be standing at the circulation desk side-by-side with a support staff member doing the same thing that they are doing. So long as this arrangement exists, the perception that librarianship does not require an advanced degree will continue to taint the image of the profession.*

*It is a disservice to the education, to the degree, and to the profession when the bulk of a librarian's daily tasks could be performed by someone with a GED... [H]ow can we separate the MLS from the paraprofessional? Should the profession insist on a greater separation of duties? Should we surrender the reference desk over to the paraprofessional and adopt “research hours” where we can sit down with people who have **actual** reference questions? What needs to change in how we approach the job in the context of the library?*

While I do like the idea of “research hours,” I’m afraid I’m fairly sure my paraprofessional self could handle them as well as many--though certainly not all--professional librarians.

That’s the start—and, reading through Woodworth’s original post, I’m reminded why I rarely commented on his stuff. I was struck by that boldfaced “actual” in the quoted segment and the paragraph in general. To be honest, it struck me as entitled as hell and deliberately trying to separate out True Librarians as a superior class. I mean, “How can we separate the MLS from the paraprofessional?”—with that instantly-demeaning “para”—be taken otherwise?

I’m on board with Lloyd here, and I like the piece. Do read the comments—critically.

### *Twelve theses on libraries and librarians*

This piece, by Ben Myers on [February 16, 2010](#) at *Faith and Theology*, is different and refreshing. I won’t comment on it, and of course it is nine years old, but you may still find it different and refreshing (even as you probably take issue with one or more of the theses—and do note in #11 that “rash” is a key word).

## Conclusion

And that’s it. Fourteen of the original 60-odd (I think) survived, and maybe I should have trimmed even more. But hey, it’s the final essay in a final issue that maybe I shouldn’t even bother publishing (in a journal that may disappear if I screw up migrating what will be a static site).

---

# Masthead

*Cites & Insights: Crawford at Large*, Volume 19, Number 9, Whole # 227, ISSN 1534-0937, a periodical of libraries, policy, technology and media, is written and produced by Walt Crawford. This is the final issue.

Comments should be sent to [waltcrawford@gmail.com](mailto:waltcrawford@gmail.com). *Cites & Insights: Crawford at Large* is copyright ©2019 by Walt Crawford: Some rights reserved.

All original material in this work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](#).

URL: [citesandinsights.info/civ19i9.pdf](http://citesandinsights.info/civ19i9.pdf)