Editorial: Editor Sings the Blues   John Webb

I am discovering that the composition of a second editorial is hard work.

I approached the editorial for the March issue, my first as the new editor of *ITAL*, with spirit and energy and enthusiasm. I was, to put it succinctly, full of myself. I submitted it to ALA Production Services on time and under budget. I submitted the second issue, for June, on time and under budget. The third issue is, for all intensive purposes (to quote a friend of mine and garble a common expression), ready to go as well, on time and under budget. The manuscripts for the December issue are coming together nicely, and today is April 15. What's more, I am on vacation, sitting in our nice house in Sunriver, Oregon, on the east slopes of the Cascades and a hundred yards from the banks of the Deschutes River. It's a beautiful, albeit a bit chilly, day. I have written other things that were published in ALA journals sitting here on similarly beautiful days.

What has changed? Has the earth stopped rotating? Has someone discovered the fountain of youth? Is that a volcano rumbling that I hear in the background? (No, it's the wind in the pine trees.) Why is this editorial hard work? Is the honeymoon over?

There are, I feel, several reasons. First, the earth did not stop rotating, and as of this writing, that fountain is nowhere to be found. A volcano will erupt in the Cascades, probably some time soon, but probably not today. I don't think a honeymoon came with this job, so that's probably not "it" either. (A handy pronoun, "it!") In short, I'm not sure I can find that I've made any difference?

Certainly, that first editorial made no difference. How often do you ask or overhear someone else asking, "Hey, did you read that editorial yesterday?" It happens. Don't think I have ever asked it about *ITAL*, and I doubt I will ever overhear it either.

Why shouldn't I still feel I'm a fire-breathing, rallying-troops-to-the-cause editor?

What's the good news? You should have found some of the articles in the March issue challenging; the articles in this issue, I guarantee you, will knock your socks off; and I expect the September issue is either going to delight or outrage you, or both. I expect letters to the editor.

But *ITAL* doesn't have a section for letters to the editor. I'm going to find a way to make such a section available online—soon.

I went to the editorial board meeting at ALA Midwinter with a list of brilliant ideas as long as my arm. I need longer arms. Members and readers, your *ITAL* Editorial Board is a merciless pack of junkyard dogs. They have rejected 50 percent of all manuscripts submitted. They have required major rewrites of every accepted manuscript. And they saw the nonsense in every one of my half-witted ideas. Including the last one, which I had warned that, by that time, even *they* would think was pure genius. I don't remember what the ideas were anymore.

Except for the last, in which they found a tasty kernel; here it is, thanks to the board.

2006 is the fortieth anniversary of *ITAL* and its predecessor, the *Journal of Library Automation*. How many of you know that Fred Kilgour was the founding editor of the *Journal of Library Automation*? I suspect not many.

We, the board and humble editor, propose to dedicate either one issue or a series of articles in all of the issues, to Fred as founding editor. Not Fred as founder of OCLC but as founding editor of our journal. I propose (this was the kernel of my brilliant idea that the board chewed on instead of chewed up) that I shall solicit articles describing seminal current research or comprehensive summaries of state-of-the-art developments. I shall be soliciting these, even before you read this, from leaders in our field. I have a list of names, you know who you are, and I know where you are. You cannot escape. We in the profession today owe so much to his vision of what an ALA technology journal should be. We owe it to him to make *ITAL* a "destination" journal for articles in the field of information technology in libraries.

It will be impossible for me to solicit every article that I should. Some of you are doing work right now about the existence of which I know nothing. To garble Robert Frost, when should that ever be a bar to any watch you keep. (Forget about the inconvenient fact that the lines that precede the real Frost phrase go something like: "they cannot look out far, they cannot look in deep. . . .") I am holding up my sign to all of you now: Will Garble for Great Articles. Your obligation is to look either out far or in deep, or both, and respond.

I ask that when—not if—you do submit an article that you want to dedicate to Fred Kilgour as founding editor, you tell me in your cover message that you would like it to be considered as such and if accepted, labeled as such.

Hey, this editorial writing business is not such a hard job after all. I feel better already!

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