

## Against the Grain

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# Oregon Trails: Literary Snob

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as accustomed to continuing resources as the library is. The number of years a department is prepared to support a resource should be addressed at the outset to be sure they understand the facts of yearly budgeting and inflation. At first we didn't contact the department until the renewal notice or invoice arrived, but that didn't leave the departments much time to consider if they wanted to continue support. If they didn't continue support, there was the possibility that the library would need to cover the cost instead. In the current fiscal year, emails were sent to each department with usage data about the resources, estimated cost for each resource, and a request for confirmation of continuing support. We received all positive responses, but we also learned that one department would only agree to one more year of support. It was good to have warning.

The number of people that need to be involved and informed is growing: subject specialist, decision maker in the academic department, administrative/accounting person in the department, administrative/accounting person in the library, electronic resource librarian, and the dean of the library. One person should be designated as the coordinator of the process, who will follow the process through each stage. For tracking purposes, and as a contact list, we have developed a spreadsheet. In addition to names and emails, we also track when the transfer was complete and when the invoice was ready for payment. We wanted to be able to easily distinguish the money spent on these resources so we created a separate fund code. Eventually, we also created a separate code for the library's portion of shared costs.

As our materials budget barely keeps up with inflation, and as institutional funds are pushed to cover that inflation, the library will only be relying more heavily on financial support from other areas of the university and from endowment growth. The acquisitions and continuing resource departments will need to be even more careful to be certain the library is using the funds we have correctly and wisely. 🌲

**Marketing Academic Libraries**  
from page 63

**Works Cited**

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# Oregon Trails — Literary Snob

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Just recently I finished reading my first eBook, "*W*" is for Wasted by Sue Grafton. It was not a bad experience, but the book is an extremely easy read, a virtual skim. It was a convoluted, riveting story and despite the needless descriptions of clothes, automobile retrievals, and such, I enjoyed it. The fact that I couldn't tell how close I was to the ending was a minor irritant.

I also have several eBooks on philosophy on my iPad. One advantage of an iPad or any computer or tablet is that I can have both the Kindle and the Nook applications without their proprietary hardware. In a pinch I could even read them on my Android smart phone, not something that I am likely to do, but there it is anyway.

In my bookcases there are hundreds of books, retirement reading, that I have gathered over the years, books with physical identities that speak to me in ways that a computer icon can't. eBooks are, in effect, scrolls that were made obsolete by the codex. Some people are convinced that the codex is obsolete and that the electronic scroll is superior because it takes up no shelf space, the fonts are adjustable (instant large-print books), and the text can be read without overhead or bedside lighting.

But the eBook in some ways does not really exist until all of those zeroes and ones are translated into graphic characters that make sense to us. And when our machine is not turned on and we don't have a table of contents, a catalog of those eBooks, they are out of sight and out of mind — an important concept with real consequences. And in an extreme way, you don't really own an eBook. If you borrow one from a public library, it can never be overdue so if you have not finished it and the due date draws near, you'd best renew it lest it disappear even as you race to the finish. It is simply gone. You have saved a trip to the library but you have also lost an opportunity to browse the stacks or the catalog for old favorites or new adventures.

Had I a thousand eBooks (I can't imagine owning a hundred much less a thousand), I couldn't trade them at a paperback exchange or sell them to a second-hand bookseller. The bookseller may buy my books for a few cents on the dollar but the books are off my shelves and available to another reader, a kindred spirit, and so on *ad infinitum* or as long as the paper and binding last, and that depends ultimately on the type of book and the associated reader or collector.

I collect books. Some collections are of authors that I particularly enjoy. I also build

collections on subjects that happen to strike my fancy. Tastes are acquired and lost, interests change, but the books are immutable. Even when the reader comments in the margins, the original voice remains. The author has the advantage of time, space, inspiration, learning, imagination, zeal, and drive, things that supported the effort it took to write the book. Second guessing, even educated, erudite questioning, is mere child's play.

eBooks, I am told, can be annotated and that could be an advantage to a scholar, researcher, or reviewer, but the effort seems greater and the efficacy of it, as opposed to a marginal note on a physical page, seems less than I am comfortable with.

I make marginal notes on the page and then note on the end paper the page number and other notes or quotations as I see fit. Some of the notes go into a commonplace book. Of course commonplace notes can come from eBooks, too, and can even be housed on one's computer or the Cloud, but for me, writing with an old-fashioned fountain pen provides an organic connection between physical book, physical notebook, and writing instrument. What you are reading now first appeared as a hand-written entry in a journal.

I still write letters and postcards every month to family and friends and when I get a friendly admonition at a family reunion, to wit, "Tommy, I love getting your cards but I can't read your writing," I take great pains when writing her next card or letter to slow down and mix my printing and cursive into an orderly, legible italic of sorts. Now she simply calls me to acknowledge receipt and by other comments, I can tell that she could read my writing.

One's handwriting, legible or not, is a window into one's personality, one's very soul. I took a German course from a professor who had us write something for her at each class meeting. She would supply us with unlined paper and told us that she could tell a lot about us by how straight or crooked or slanted our lines were. I believed her then, and I believe her now. The handwritten mail that I receive is not only welcome, that familiar handwriting provides a personal, intimate connection with that person that an email does not. Even a typed letter is preferred over an electronic missive because once you get to that familiar signature, all is well. The handwritten letter is a part of the author and provides an artifact that I can touch. As I read it, I commune with the correspondent in an intimate, spiritual way. I can save that artifact for a later re-reading, a reminder of the ties that bind.

I feel the same way about the books on my shelves and on the shelves of libraries and bookstores and of friends and acquaintances.

*continued on page 65*



# Wandering the Web — How About a (Virtual) Cuppa? A Highly Selective Introduction to Tea Online

by **Roxanne Myers Spencer** (Associate Professor and Coordinator, Educational Resources Center, Western Kentucky University Libraries)

Column Editor: **Jack G. Montgomery** (Professor, Coordinator, Collection Services, Western Kentucky University Libraries)  
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**Column Editor's Note:** From the *Huffington Post* to *Time Magazine Online* to *WebMD*, the Internet is afloat with the health benefits of tea. — **JM**

## Tea Is Good for You

The second most popular beverage on Earth? Yes, tea. Second only to water, tea is the most-consumed beverage on the planet. Why? From help with weight loss to stress relief (there's a symbiotic relationship there!) to fighting free radicals to improved exercise endurance and more, the humble cuppa — elsewhere in the world the most-consumed beverage — is coming into its own in the United States.

The Blog at HuffPost Healthy Living posted “6 amazing health benefits of tea” (2013). Time magazine online touted “13 reasons tea is good for you” in their Health and Family section (2012). WebMD created a short video clip reporting on the increase in tea consumption and published online articles on the health benefits of different types of tea (2013). After viewing the WebMD material, you can even take a quiz to test your knowledge on green tea! Dr. Oz and Fox News also showcase information on the health benefits of tea.

Getting interested? Good. I'll put the kettle on, and we'll learn some more over a nice hot cup of tea. What kind of tea? Glad you asked! We have lots of choices — there are literally thousands of blends of tea in the world, although true tea derives from one plant, *camellia sinensis*, and a varietal, *camellia sinensis assamica*. Differences in flavor, color, and benefits derive largely from the processing after the tea leaves are picked.

The four most common types of tea in the West are black (most oxidized or fermented leaves), green (leaves are steamed), oolong (or *wu long*, fermented, then pan-fired), white (least cured or fermented), and recently gaining in popularity, pu-erh (fermented, raw, or aged tea, often sold in cakes or bricks). It is interesting to note that black tea, as it is popularly known in the West, is referred to as red tea in its country of origin, and indeed the origin of all teas, China.

## A (Very) Few Tea Vendors (among Many): A Drop in the Vast Teapot of Online Tea Vendors

Tea grows best in high, moist elevations, and the *camellia sinensis* plant can be found all over the world. According to the Tea Association of the USA:

Much of the world's tea is grown in mountainous areas 3,000-7,000 feet above sea level, situated between the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn in mineral-rich soil. Leading tea-producing countries include Argentina, China, India, Indonesia, Kenya Malawi, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, and Taiwan (Tea Fact Sheet, 2013).

There are a number of small, artisanal tea gardens in the United States, but the best-known commercial U. S. tea producer is the Charleston Tea Plantation, owned by Bigelow Tea, which produces American Classic Tea.

You say you like flavored teas? Well, sit back and take a fortifying sip or two, this could take a while. Popular online tea vendor Adagio Teas boasts more than 57,166 blends, as of May 2014. How is this possible? Brilliant social media marketing: Adagio customers create and rate tea blends online, often based on popular culture fandom. For example, TV series fandom blends include highly subjective and wildly varied teas based on characters from *Sherlock*, *Dr. Who*, and the late, lamented *Firefly*, to name but a few of the popular groups of blends.

Teavana, now owned by Starbucks, is opening tea specialty stores following the phenomenally successful Starbucks coffee bar model. Originally in upscale malls or freestanding stores, with colorful walls of tea tins and heavy on the Asian style tea accessories, Teavana was perhaps the first national chain to popularize and yuppify tea. Teavana advertises more than 100 teas on their Website.

On the less trendy side, don't be put off by the crowded, narrow screenspace of the Upton Tea Imports Website (as of this writing). Compared to the more colorful imagery and photos of teas to be found on other vendor sites, Upton comes off as dowdy as Aunt Matilda's tea

*continued on page 66*



## Oregon Trails from page 64

I think that it was **Samuel Johnson** (*Boswell's Johnson*) who wrote that one may learn a lot simply by reading the spines of books on shelves. An erstwhile friend of mine once told me that when he first visited the home of his wife's parents, he noted that the only books that they owned were some Reader's Digest Condensed Books and a medical dictionary. Were those books and what they represented the a root cause for my friend's divorce? Or was it his prolonged but successful pursuit of a Ph.D. in English literature? What one finds on the bookshelves of those one visits provides insights about interests, mindsets,

politics, and levels of education. To suggest that the contents of a bookshelf might have led to a divorce is silly on the face of it, but to focus on the selection suggests a disparity in interests that might well manifest itself in ways that led to a parting of ways.

When I was in the Army, another college dropout (**Stanford**, in his case) accused me of being a literary snob because I used to give him a hard time for reading nothing but mysteries. When I shared a barracks with him I was reading **Edward Albee**, **James Agee**, **Ayn Rand**, **Thomas Wolfe**, **Malamud**, **Bellow**, **Kesey**, and **Kerouac**, to name a few of the writers that occupied much of my free time at Ft. Bragg. I read mysteries now and my first and only eBook reading was a mystery. I regularly read mysteries now and have for years and prefer

them to most films and television programs. But I am not really a literary snob as much as I am someone with certain preferences, and most of what I enjoy reading and need to read to satisfy an inner hunger, needs to be in my bookcases or on an end table where I can see them and take them in my hands and read them or consult them whenever I want to without turning on a machine or typing a command or search query. There is nothing but space between me and my books, and when I leave this earth I will have made provisions for my old friends much as others do for their pets. And I will continue to write with a fountain pen, and as long as those cards and letters survive in the hands of friends and family, a part of me will live on. 🐸