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I Hear the Train A Comin' -- A Tale of Two Cities

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a Green, a church and the “holy wells,” which gave the site its name. It still teems with meadow life, just as it was described in the **Doomsday** book. Although its peace was temporarily disturbed during the **Civil War**, and again in the eighteenth century when it was used as a cockpit and a bowling green, it was restored when **Merton College** acquired the land and made it available as a burial ground. **Benjamin Harris’s** grave lies NW of the Church, and a notice, by the wooden bench, points it out. And he is in good company. At the sound of a **Stanley Spencersque** trumpet, he could arise to a roll-call of many notable book people: the writer **Kenneth Grahame**, poets like **Maurice Bowra**, brushing up on his **Pindar**, **Charlie Williams**, **Basil Blackwell’s** old **OUP** friend, and the drama critic, **Kenneth Tynan**. There are others too, who served the causes of the University, and far beyond: **Radcliffe-Maude**, for example, who founded **UNESCO**. **Benjamin Harris’s** glee can only be imagined at when he discovers himself in the company of the great Victorian church composer, **John Stainer**, hymning himself through eternity. 🌿

Editor’s Note: In next month’s issue *Rita* will consider the role of women in the **Blackwell** story. The modest **Benjamin Harris** is not forgotten; his beginnings in bookselling were the inspiration for the future bookselling and publishing “empire.” But it is doubtful if his small shop “on the wrong side of Oxford’s City wall,” would ever have been revived if it had not been for the determination of his wife, **Nancy**. — **KS**

Endnotes

1. **Dame Jessica Rawson**, Preface, in **Rita Ricketts**, *Adventurers All: Tales of Blackwellians, of Books, Bookmen and Reading and Writing Folk.* Reading and Writing Folk, Blackwell’s 2002.
2. **Gilda O’Neill**, *My East End*, Penguin, London, 1999, pp 20-31.
3. **Basil Blackwell’s** words.
4. The Book as a Commodity, L’Apparition du Livre, **Albin Michel**, 1958.
5. *Oxford Directory*, 1846, taken from the description of Oxford, pp 2- 3.
6. See, for example, **Adrian Desmond**, Huxley, Penguin, London, 1994.
7. For example, the relaxation of the requirement that Fellows be ordained and single.
8. op cit, **Fasnacht**, pp198-202.
9. op cit **Ruth Fasnacht**, p 140.
10. The **City Council** became increasingly aware of the need to relax the “Freeman” regulations: allowing more people to open up in trade and created employment opportunities, even if this meant sacrificing the preservation of Oxford’s beauty: see op cit **Fasnacht**, p 203.
11. *The Oxford Directory*, 1846.
12. Thoughts on early beginnings — **Basil Blackwell** (no date as yet found).
13. In one case at least, **Fred Trash**, also a publisher.
14. *A History of the City of Oxford*, **Ruth Fasnacht**, **Basil Blackwell**, 1952, p 193.
15. **Basil Blackwell**, notes on the Functions of a Good Bookshop, September 30 1952.
16. Scrapbook, **Oxford City Library**, 1855-1954, p 5.
17. *The Public Library Act*, 14 August 1850. **Joseph Taylor**, **Oxford City Library**, 1855-1954, pp 4 -7.
18. op cit, **Oxford Library** p 4.
19. **Dutton, Allen and Co’s Directory and Gazetteer** for 1863.
20. This Bill can be seen in the **Merton Blackwell Collection**.
21. A story handed down to **Basil** by his father, **Benjamin Henry**.
22. Article written in 1839, in the **Merton Blackwell Collection**.
23. See, for example, a letter from **Sir Basil** to **J P Wells**, the *Oxford City Librarian*, 17 February 1973.
24. **Basil Blackwell’s** notes, **Merton Blackwell Collection**, **Oxford University**.
25. **Marvell**, *To His Coy Mistress*.

I Hear the Train A Comin’ — A Tale of Two Cities

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“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times...,” so begins the **Dickens** classic *A Tale of Two Cities*. This contradictory statement, this duality, will also serve as the theme for this November’s 28th annual **Charleston Conference**. At that time, publishers, librarians, information providers, scholars, and vendors will gather to discuss the state of affairs at this wondrous intersection of technology, content, and academia. As both a preview of the conference and an homage to **Dickens’** masterpiece, let’s look at some other key passages from *A Tale of Two Cities* and how they map to some critical scholarly communication issues sure to be discussed in Charleston.

“A dream, all a dream, that ends in nothing, and leaves the sleeper where he lay down, but I wish you to know that you inspired it.”

To **Harvard University’s** Faculty of Arts and Sciences and its recent adoption of an open access mandate. In February, **Harvard** became the most prominent university in the United States to require open access to its faculty members’ research publications. This kicked up a great deal of



dust within the space, but what does it actually mean? As **Sandy Thatcher** and others have pointed out, the policy is either inconsistent, underdeveloped, or silent on several key points, including the timing of deposits, copyright retention rights, and versioning. Nevertheless, other institutions seemed poised to follow suit, including **Stanford’s School of Education** and **Macquarie University** at this writing. What influence will this have on scholars’ actual behavior, publishers’ policies, and the general accessibility of scholarship? In the short run, if other high profile mandates such as the **NIH’s** are a template, the impact will be more abstract than practical. Adoption rates have been less impressive than the publicity these initiatives have generated. It is quite possible that an eventual tipping point will be reached as wave after wave of institutional mandates erode the traditional structures of information dissemination. That is the dream of open access advocates, of course. Or it may be that **Harvard** has started a chain reaction that, like the **Dickens** quote, “ends in nothing”. In any event, **Harvard**, “I wish you to know that you inspired it.”

“Up the two terrace flights of steps the rain ran wildly, and beat at the great door, like a swift messenger rousing those within.”

To the **Kindle**, a device that has burst onto the scholarly communication scene amidst a clamor of fervent expectations. In my conversations with textbook and journal publishers, students, librarians, and university administrators, I have been asked numerous times over the past few months about **Amazon’s** handheld reader device. Instructors want to offer course materials that can be downloaded onto **Kindles**. Vendors like **Highwire** are tweaking their platforms to deliver content in a **Kindle-friendly** format. University presses such as **Princeton**, **Yale**, **University of California**, and **Oxford** have been very quick to make their catalogs available for **Kindle**. It is wonderful to see the market excited over new developments, particularly when sectors like the university press have often been flat-footed in embracing emerging media. However, before we get too excited, let me ask something. Are you using a **Kindle**? Do you know someone who is using a **Kindle**? Have you even seen a **Kindle**? We have been roused by the **Kindle**; it is the rain running wildly and beating at our great door. It may well turn out to be a trans-

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formative device. Let's revisit this at the **2009 Charleston Conference**.

"The ghost of beauty, the ghost of stateliness, the ghost of elegance, the ghost of pride, the ghost of frivolity, the ghost of wit, the ghost of youth, the ghost of age, all waiting their dismissal from the desolate shore..."

To the aforementioned university press. For many years, the university press imprimatur has connoted quality and intellectual vibrancy. The effects of the scholarly communication crisis have been keenly felt by this group over the past two decades. Monographs continue to struggle finding a place within library budgets, as do, increasingly, print books in general. Marketing dollars are scarce, and fixed costs are nontrivial. However, we can clearly observe pockets of innovation emerging over the past few years. **Rice University** has revived its press in digital only mode, relying on low-cost print-on-demand for those who want hard copy. **Columbia University Press** has teamed with the library and the IT department to co-found **Electronic Publishing Initiative at Columbia (EPIC)**. EPIC's goal — to create new kinds of scholarly and educational publications through the use of new media technologies — has already resulted in the development of the **Columbia International Affairs Online** and **Earthscape** platforms. **Penn State Press** and the **University Libraries** have partnered on an **Office of Digital Scholarly Publishing** to recognize efficiencies on project management, budgeting, and opportunity evaluation. Will these types of experiments reinvigorate the category? Or is the venerable institution truly in danger of joining **Dickens'** ghosts on the desolate shore?

Standards Column
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adoption. There certainly will be more to watch in the coming months related to **OOXML**.

There are numerous ways that community members may participate in the international standards development process. Although there is an added level of logistical challenges when participating at this level, it can be a truly rewarding experience. Not only is this a great opportunity to interact with colleagues internationally and experience their culture, it is also an opportunity to help shape the future directions of information exchange. If you are interested in engaging more directly in international standardization, please contact the **NISO** offices at nisohq@niso.org. 🍄

Endnotes

1. Contrary to popular belief, **ISO** is not an acronym for the name in a different language. Because the organization name would have different acronyms for each language, the short name of **ISO** was chosen — derived from the Greek *isos*, meaning "equal" — to be the all-purpose name in any language.

"... tell Wind and Fire where to stop," returned madame; "but don't tell me."

The Wind and the Fire might be told where to stop, but international scientific collaboration is another matter. As I mentioned in a recent *Train* column, China is growing as both a creator and consumer of scholarly content. The supporting data are in some ways staggering. To briefly recap, China's **GDP** investment in research and development will grow from around 1% earlier this decade to 2.5% in 2020. Higher education enrollment has increased more than five-fold since 1996. China had a 20-fold increase in publications in international scientific journals from 1981 to 2003. The other BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) are similarly emerging as important actors within the academic research system. However, legal restrictions, particularly within the United States, have limited the scope of collaboration between domestic and international scientists. Laws limit the extent to which federal funds can be shared with foreign collaborators. Visas regulations restrict face-to-face interaction among international team members. Espionage concerns cabin off dual-use equipment that might speed diffuse research efforts. While the protection of taxpayer resources and state secrets are principles that should not be taken lightly, several efforts are underway to loosen these restrictions in the name of scientific advancement. One notable example is the **American Association for the Advancement of Science's** recently launched **Center for Science Diplomacy** (see <http://diplomacy.aaas.org/>). In an era where connectivity and connectedness are increasingly the norm, one suspects that the impediments to international scientific collaboration will be eroded and perhaps overrun in the coming years.

"You anticipate what I would say, though you cannot know how earnestly I say it, how earnestly I feel it, without knowing my secret heart, and the hopes and fears and anxieties with which it has long been laden."

Back Talk
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Amazon could be the collector of university presses? Were this to happen, the effects of the

POD butterfly might not end here. With **Amazon** involved, what will happen to academic book vendors? Maybe **Amazon** could buy one or more of approval vendors and simplify the whole process. We live in interesting times. Watch out for butterflies! 🍄

Endnotes

1. "Bound." (June 5, 2008). *The Economist*. [Electronic Version]. Retrieved July 23, 2008 from http://www.economist.com/business/displaystory.cfm?story_id=11504752.
2. **Jones, Philip**. (May 27, 2008). **Bowker** reports huge US p.o.d. surge. *Bookseller.com*. Retrieved July 23, 2008 from <http://www.thebookseller.com/news/59802-bowker-reports-huge-us-pod-surge.html>.
3. **Tetreault, Melissa**. (March 2008). Short run books: "Digital printers offer runs of one to many." **Digital Publishing Solutions**. Retrieved July 23, 2008 from <http://www.dpsmagazine.com/content/ContentCT.asp?P=383>.
4. **Bacher, Thomas**. (July 31, 2007). **Rice E Press**. *Inside Higher ED*. Retrieved July 23, 2008 from <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2007/07/31/ricepress>.



To the notion of social networks. I have had at least a dozen clients in the past year for which Web 2.0 strategies were a key concern, so I must be careful not to bite the hand that at least has a hand in feeding me. Having said that, the ever-increasing immediacy and intimacy of communication may be reaching its terminus. From blogs to **MySpace** to **Facebook** to **Twitter**, we are now looped into the most evanescent of moods, thoughts, and ruminations. The borders between personal and professional, profound and piffing, insight and inanity have never been blurrier. How do these networks influence the way scholars interact? What efficiencies are created? What impact does the ability to be so wired into other people's thoughts and actions, and, in turn, to have other people so wired into yours, have on the exchange of ideas? Perhaps the **Charleston Conference** can help us untangle these issues and learn to cut through the cluttering aspects of social networks.

"It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done; it is a far, far better rest that I go to, than I have ever known."

This one is easy isn't it? What is better than strolling through the lobby of the **Francis Marion Hotel** in early November when the **Charleston Conference** is in session? Catching up with old friends. Exchanging ideas on the next big thing with colleagues. Holding court in an overstuffed armchair as a session ends and familiar faces pour out, enlightened and invigorated. And crashing into the hotel bed after a full day of intellectual stimulation, capped off by a fine southern meal. A far, far better thing indeed. See you in November. 🍄