

## Against the Grain

---

Volume 22 | Issue 4

Article 36

---

September 2010

# Little Red Herrings-A "Wall" By Any Other Name Remains Equally Inspired?

Mark Herring

Winthrop University, [herringm@winthrop.edu](mailto:herringm@winthrop.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg>

 Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Herring, Mark (2010) "Little Red Herrings-A "Wall" By Any Other Name Remains Equally Inspired?," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 22: Iss. 4, Article 36.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.5624>

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact [epubs@purdue.edu](mailto:epubs@purdue.edu) for additional information.

Notes from Mosier  
from page 76

exhibits, but book vendors, serials agents, automation vendors and publishers attend and interact as colleagues. I must indeed thank **Alibris, Ebsco, Gale Cengage, Puvill, Swets, and YBP**. We really appreciate it!

This year's keynote speaker was none other than our own **Katina Strauch!** **Katina's** presentation, "All I Need to Know I Learned at the **Charleston Conference**" was, as you'd expect, thought-provoking and engaging. With the help of **Stacey Devine**, Assistant Head of Acquisitions and Rapid Cataloging at the **Northwestern University Library**, we're working on a Website to host presentations, past programs, and other content from earlier **Timberlines** — I'll let you know when **Katina's** presentation, as well as others, are up and available.

The 2010 conference was also a first in that **Camila Alire**, **ALA** President, was in attendance and gave welcoming remarks. In addition, **Molly Raphael**, now **ALA** President-elect, was able to join us as well.

The complete 2010 program is available for viewing at our main Website, [libweb.uoregon.edu/ec/aitl](http://libweb.uoregon.edu/ec/aitl).

A couple of years ago someone referred to us as a "boutique conference," and initially I resented the remark. The more I thought about it, though, I decided it wasn't such a bad reference after all. We work very hard to provide the best possible conference experience, particularly regarding the program content (it's not all skiing and St. Bernards). So, if you're interested in a meeting somewhat off the beaten path, keep us in mind. Feel free to contact me with any questions. I hope to see you on the Mountain next May!

**The Acquisitions Institute Planning Committee:**

**Faye Chadwell, Oregon State University**  
**Nancy Slight-Gibney, University of Oregon**  
**Scott Alan Smith, Alibris**

**The Institute** is an Oregon educational non-profit corporation, #361549-95; EIN 71-1001116. 🌿



# McFarland

This fall, we are publishing nearly  
200 books about such topics as:

Pop Culture | Sports | Literature

Military History | Transportation

Dance | Medieval Studies | Health

Graphic Novels | Librarianship

Architecture | Urban Studies

General Reference | Peace

Visit our website or send for a print  
catalog of our new and forthcoming books.

Box 611 Jeferson NC 28640 • 800-253-2187 • FAX 336-246-4460

[www.mcfarlandpub.com](http://www.mcfarlandpub.com)

## Little Red Herrings — A "Wall" by Any Other Name Remains Equally Insipid?

by **Mark Y. Herring** (Dean of Library Services, Dacus Library, Winthrop University) <[herringm@winthrop.edu](mailto:herringm@winthrop.edu)>

**F**or those who keep up with such things, it now appears that the whole social network craze is, well, a little forced, postured, and otherwise created out of thin air. It's not unlike the so-called "HPOA Girl" who quit her job using a dry-erase board and caused an Internet sensation. **Jay Leno, Steven Colbert**, "Good Morning America," et al, all wanted her on board. Everyone shook their heads in a knowing way: we hear you sister, and we wish we had done that. We all discovered that it was all postured from the beginning by a Website known for its antics (<http://TheChive.com>). Then came the news that **Wikipedia** really was trying to fix its quality issues; but amid all that work, many young people didn't really believe it to be that reliable anyway. "Our goal," said co-founder **Jimmy Wales** in an **Ad Tech** conference in

November last year, "is to make **Wikipedia** as high-quality as possible. **Britannica** or better quality is the goal," he said. While the online encyclopedia is much better than it was, it still has "issues." So much so, that in May of this year, it began to look to experts for contributions by teaming up with universities. Openness is not the enemy of quality, of course, but it may make it harder to achieve without the intervention of those who know what they're talking about.

**Pew** informed us early this (<http://bit.ly/cQdgi3>) year that "kids" don't blog anymore, and it's likely they never did. Only 14% of tweens and teens (12-17 years of age) still blog, down from 25% just four years ago. Apparently blogging is an "old person's" task. The same **Pew** study points out that young people may well be "sick" of **Twitter**, and as for **Facebook**, they all have one but just aren't that much into it anymore. Add to all this, the datum that the so-called "online generation" really isn't as savvy as we thought. The "digital natives" are not necessarily tech-savvy. The tech-savvy folks are 30-something, not 20 something. Digital natives are more

likely to attend the "University of Google" for everything, regardless of its success or lack thereof (<http://bit.ly/bvXGIM>). While working on another project I ran across some data that might surprise readers about the "age" of the so-called social networking era.

According to **Royal Pingdom** in a study done earlier this year (<http://bit.ly/bPpWOf>), it would appear that the average social networking user is a geezer, or she may as well be. In a study of 19 social networking sites, fully one quarter are 35-44, if you stretch that to 55, that age bracket accounts for nearly 45% of all users. And the female pronoun above is not merely for the sake of political correctness: more women than men use social networks.

It doesn't end there, either. The social network one uses correlates to one's age. If you have a **Bebo** account, you're probably 17 years of age or younger. On the other hand, if you have a **Facebook** or **Twitter** account, you are likely to be 35 years of age, or older. The average age of a **Facebook**, **Digg**, **StumbleUpon**, **Twitter**, **Delicious**, **LinkedIn** or **Classmates** user is thirty-eight, or older. Put your teeth

*continued on page 78*




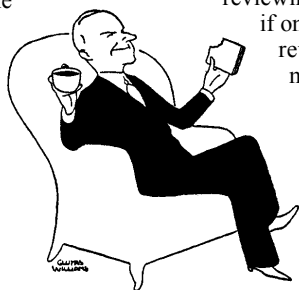
back in. Members of the last two in the list are likely to be over 44 years of age. I SAID, MEMBERS OF THE LAST ... okay, you get the picture. Let me hasten to add that of the 19 social networking-type sites examined in this study, not one site had 18-24 year olds as the dominant age group. Part of that is surely because the age bracket spans 7 years and not 10, as the other bracket snapshots do. But part of it must be because many of those that age are simply not on these sites, and this list contains the most popular ones floating about in cyberspace. I'm not saying that teens are not using these sites. Of course they are. But the sites are predominantly populated by many who have eyes near, at, or over 40.

Yes, yes, I know. There are lies, damned lies, and statistics. But it does cause one to ponder the meaning behind the numbers. You'll note, as did I, that not one of the ages mentioned is likely to be in college. Twenty-eight year olds are very likely to be employed ... and still living at home. But 40+ year olds really are likely to be in the workforce and living on their own. We hear a great deal these days about reaching out to youth and going where they are. It would appear that where they are isn't necessarily online. Getting to them may not be as easy as we thought.

It also raises the question of just how effective such sites are for the age group we're hoping to reach. Many libraries, including the one in which I work, have **Facebook** and **Twitter** accounts. In fact, I am, as much as anyone, one of the reasons why we have those accounts. But from recent studies, it appears getting at the age group we want may not be as easy as pointing and clicking. It may also mean that making your library online "hip" is very effective if your students are 35 or older. If they are between the ages of 18 and 22 years of age — the age of most college students — perhaps not so much. It also may have something to say about moving too much of the teaching apparatus to the social networking arena until we are sure those we hope to teach will have found that arena after all. (Maybe they can "Google" us?)

More studies will have to be done and will have to come to the same conclusions as these before I am willing to saw off the social networking limb from the tree of knowledge. Still, it is enough to make me ask one small but seemingly important question:

If social networking users are all geezers (or thereabouts), who are we doing all this for? 



## As I See It! — Journal Pricing In An Electronic Environment

Column Editor: **John Cox** (Managing Director, John Cox Associates Ltd, United Kingdom; Phone: +44 (0) 1327 861184; Fax: +44 (0) 20 8043 1053) <John.E.Cox@btinternet.com> [www.johncoxassociates.com](http://www.johncoxassociates.com)

It is inevitable that the impact of the recession in the general economy from which we are now emerging has still not fully worked its way through higher education. There has been a time lag between the impact of the financial crisis and budget cuts in the public sector of the economy. In the UK, only now are we faced by significant cuts in public spending, which will affect the university sector. Libraries' acquisition budgets throughout Europe are likely to be static at best. We are simply following in the footsteps of the US economy. And the outlook is not promising in the foreseeable future.

Publishers have done relatively little to restructure their pricing models to adjust to two new realities: libraries' constrained ability to pay, and the overwhelming dominance of online journals in the modern library. Some publishers have frozen prices or have put through very low increases. But prices are still modeled on the individual journal subscription price, and even the Big Deal with consortia is grounded in the libraries' print holdings.

We have tracked scholarly publishing practice in a series of surveys for **ALPSP**. In the last survey in 2008, pricing methodology remained as complex as it had been five years before (**Cox J.** and **Cox L.**, *Scholarly Publishing Practice, Third Survey 2008*, **ALPSP**, 2009). However, there has been a dramatic fall in the use of including online access with print subscriptions amongst large publishers and an increase in online-only pricing and 'other' models, including tiered pricing by number of sites, by FTEs and by classification schemes such as **JISC Banding** in the UK, and the **Carnegie Classification** in the USA:

- **JISC Charging Bands** are based on the public funding that UK universities are allocated by the government agencies responsible, the Funding Councils.
- **Carnegie classifications** tier universities by three fundamental qualities: what is taught at undergraduate and postgraduate level, the student profile, and size.
- **FTE-based pricing models** do not necessarily count FTEs in the entire university; in some cases, only faculty, staff and students in specified disciplines, schools, or departments may be counted.

In July 2009 **Elsevier** announced that it was reviewing journal pricing models, if only because 90 percent of its revenues from the academic market are for e-journal access. Since the launch of *Science Direct* in 1997, online usage has grown to half a billion downloads per year, but **Elsevier** has acknowledged that its journal pricing structures, however, have not kept

pace with this speed of change ([www.elsevier.com/wps/find/journalpricing.cws\\_home/reconsidering\\_journal\\_pricing](http://www.elsevier.com/wps/find/journalpricing.cws_home/reconsidering_journal_pricing)). It is not alone; most of the big publishers are working on how they can decouple online pricing from the printed edition.

In the online environment, the published subscription prices for individual journals bears little resemblance to what an institution pays for participating in a consortium deal or subscribing directly to a subject-based collection, which may represent a considerable saving on published subscription prices. Publishers have wanted to maintain their revenue streams, and libraries have been wary of accepting new models that significantly vary the total price paid to each publisher. Both have been happy to accept pricing that had its base in what was spent on printed journals in the mid-1990s.

However, that is not a rational basis for moving forward. There is a steady migration to a wholly digital journal environment in most academic libraries. Both librarians and publishers are considering new pricing methodologies, based on objective criteria. These criteria may include classification, the number of sites or FTEs, as mentioned, or usage. The problem is that they all have imperfections.

The classification schemes used may well suit a particular country, but they are not transferable outside the countries for which they were devised. The UK and the USA are okay, but what about the rest of the world?

Using the number of sites in an attempt to simulate the number of print copies that the publisher might have sold to a multi-site institution makes no distinction between genuinely separate campuses, buildings spread around a city in what is essentially an integrated institution, institutions with a federal collegiate structure such as **Oxford** and **Cambridge**, where the university (with its own library system) consists of many constituent self-governing colleges (with their own college libraries), and universities with affiliated external organizations such as hospitals. It is a horrendous model on which to base pricing, as any institution that is not based on one site faces negotiation with the publisher to establish fair pricing. That incurs significant costs for the publisher which can only be recovered through prices!

Basing pricing on faculty and student population (i.e., FTEs) seems rational. However, the numbers have to be transparent and auditable. In the UK, reliable and detailed statistics on student numbers and academic staff are maintained by the **Higher Education Statistics Agency** (**HESA**: [www.hesa.ac.uk](http://www.hesa.ac.uk)). In other countries, institutions may be required to self-certify staff and student numbers. But in many countries in southern Europe, where the structure of universities varies from the typical Anglo-Saxon model, it is wholly inappropriate, as student registration means something different. Moreover, there is no

*continued on page 79*