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Pelikan's Antidisambiguation -- "Cable's in Deep Trouble."

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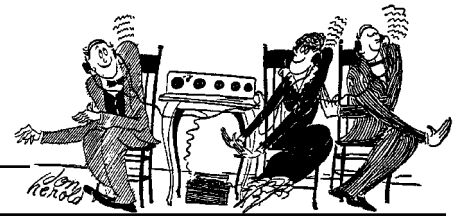
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Pelikan's Antidisambiguation — "Cable's in Deep Trouble."

Column Editor: **Michael P. Pelikan** (Penn State) <mp10@psu.edu>



Yes, I know, stop the presses: the Cable Industry's in trouble. We've known this for years. It's like some frightful operatic heroine who sings her way all the way down, down, down after drinking poison, singing, "I'm dying! Dying! Dyiiiiinnng!" To which the entire audience, save those deeply in operatic rapture, or thankfully hard of hearing and deeply in slumber, are all silently responding, "Oh, quite. Do, please. Die, already."

But, really. What the Internet began, **Netflix** and **Amazon** may finish. It's over. Well, truthfully, it'll plow on ahead for a while on sheer momentum: what with people who are used to paying, what, sixty-five, seventy-five bucks a month for a couple of hundred channels with nothing on — that's the channels that have nothing on, folks, not the people (!).

The reason for Cable's woes won't be the hideous truth that adding channels doesn't equate to adding meaningful content. Such a problem certainly has not hurt **Facebook**, let alone the whole stinking Internet itself. No, the reason Cable's finally going to take the long walk down the short pier is that, well, you can't take it with you.

Sure, you can have the cable guy install a few extra outlets around the house; if you're handy you can do it yourself. But the devices you hook up to those outlets remain tethered to them, limited in their range of motion by the length of the cord.

Ah, but cable offers us Internet access as well as those largely useless channels (The Scented Candle Channel: All Scented Candles, All the Time!). And because it's Cable, you get that great big pipe, bringing Serious Bandwidth into the Home, where we need it. Serious Bandwidth: Broadband, we call it. We need all that bandwidth cable offers us: to stream music, video clips, even movies, to permit us to upload pictures, blog posts about any ol' thing that strikes our fancy, even video clips.

Yes, but in fact, just drive down any street with a laptop and count the wifi networks announcing their presence (via their SSIDs). People with broadband service into the home seem largely to expect a wireless access point on the router in their home. Wireless on the router has become so ubiquitous that even straightforward devices that used to hang on the router now connect via wifi — printers, for example. Wi-Fi-connected still cameras have been possible for a while, most usually for studio photographers who want to bypass the memory card in their cameras and save images directly to network-attached storage as they shoot. Wi-Fi may yet emerge as a norm for the socially-connected camera: those which today rely on a flip-out USB connector to upload to a social networking site via a laptop's internet connection. But really, I'd bet that a growing number of such image uploads are coming directly from the cell phones folks are increasingly using as their "main" cameras.

Snapshots, video clips, captions, instant messages, tweets, **Facebook** updates: these seem to comprise the largest proportion of the corpus of most people's content creation these days. And, despite the continuing popularity of open Wi-Fi hotspots in commercial establishments from **McDonalds** to **Starbucks** (which resemble each other more and more by the day), the campus I happen to walk around every day provides ample evidence that the cell phone is the weapon of choice, among the under-two-score-years crowd. At the airport what you see are eBook readers — no that's not true — **iPads**, specifically, some number of which are in use for reading eBooks. But the **iPad's** hours of unchallenged supremacy may be numbered.

I'd place myself among those who think that the **Kindle Fire** will reach the status of the "other" device one mostly sees, besides the **iPod**, that is, and very rapidly: much too rapidly, in fact, for **Apple's** comfort. **Apple** may make some inroads into the corporate marketplace by providing some degree of integration with enterprise tool sets, and is already showing signs of penetrating the medical community, but besides these, plus the **Apple** Loyalist community, I'm not certain why a first-time buyer of a device in this form factor would spend more than twice as much for an **iPod** over a **Kindle Fire**, for what remains essentially a content consumption device.

And there's the whole point. **Amazon** has been positioning itself as a premier marketer of content, creeping up on having all the pieces in place. One of their smartest decisions has been to make dedicated **Amazon** store apps available at no cost in the **Android** market, including, by the way, the **Amazon Appstore**, which offers many of the same apps as the **Android Market** itself.

Any **Android** device on the planet, within reason, can be used to read a **Kindle** edition, or stream music via the **Amazon** MP3 app. Indeed, the **Kindle** app lives perfectly comfortably on the **Android** phone or tablet alongside the **Sony Reader** app and store, the **Barnes & Noble Nook** app and store, **Google Books**, and any of a number of excellent third-party eBook readers.

It has become a staple line of mine, whilst putting my shoes back on at the airport and attempting to cram all my furshlugginer devices back into my briefcase, that I can't travel anywhere without bringing more technology "than we took to the Moon." The truth be told, I have a greater willingness than most, I suspect, to travel with a bunch o' stuff: anywhere from two to four laptop or tablet computers, an **Android** tablet, a **Sony Reader**, a **Zune**, noise-canceling headphones, standard (but ridiculously high-quality) ear buds, oh, and an **Android** phone, whose functionality duplicates several of the previously mentioned bits of impedimenta (as

indeed, they do each other). I'm ever one to keep my options open, to have fail-over capacity, to be ready to be overheaded to Yakutat (believe me, been there, done that).

Why do I carry all this stuff? That was meant as a rhetorical question but truly, I wonder it. Used to be the audio section of the phone's system was so appallingly bad that the only way to protect one's ears was to use headphones so severely limited in frequency response that no damage could be done. Used to be that trying to multi-stream two or more content types on the same device was utterly hopeless — and not because the wireless bandwidth wasn't up to the challenge: what wireless bandwidth? No, the devices themselves couldn't do it, and no one expected them to.

It was a little disorienting when, some years back now, I got my first dual-core, CPU-equipped laptop: one with as much random access memory as my then-primary desktop PC. Now my laptop, my **Android** tablet, and my **Android** phone all employ dual-core processors, and the two **Android** devices are both equipped with 4G/LTE cellular radios. How fast is the combination of dual-core plus 4G? Fast enough to handle streaming **Netflix** in High Definition. To a cell phone. How do I know it's really HD? I can take an HDMI cable and run it directly into a large screen HD TV to make certain: yes, it works.

Now, this may be, in part, because the 4G networks aren't as heavily populated yet as the 3G/CDMA networks, so there are fewer consumers competing for the bandwidth. Maybe, but the hardware and the infrastructure are in place and working, and their capabilities are formidable.

The fact that I can now watch licensed content while riding the bus means that the cable systems are in deep trouble, and I'll bet they know it.

But more than that, if I was a book maker (as opposed to a bookmaker) or a book seller, I'd seriously consider trying to find a way to restructure my pricing structure. Why sell *Moby Dick* or the *Brothers Karamazov* by the byte, or at some arbitrary fraction of the price of a hardbound edition, when, maybe, you can sell them by the HOUR?

Think about it. I mean, they take practically no space to store, practically zero time to download (at least, compared to your average Boy Band video or CSI episode), but just FOREVER to read! Look at all those words! Who'd even TRY to read something like that? So make 'em pay by the page, and then incentivize it: give 'em bragging rights, maybe have the software auto-tweet, "Hey, all you ignorant lug nuts, I finished *Great Expectations*!" Or, "Hey, Dudes, I may be an Alpha Male, but I just finished my fifth **Edith Wharton** novel!"

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Take a closer look at....

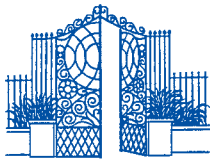
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Perhaps here is where the enlightened cable company might find the path to survival: in streaming books, "Quixotic: All Cervantes, All the Time!" Or, "Tonight: Joyce — the Comprehensible Edition."

In truth, I find literacy's prospects a little dismaying at the present time. Can the Great Novel be pounded out on a tablet screen's keyboard? Back in an electronics class I took (in the previous century), the teacher made us use slide rules for the first two months, before permitting us to employ scientific calculators. I'm certain it was good for us, but I haven't used a slide rule since. 🐼

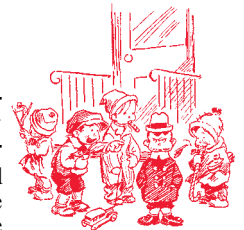
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told me in Charleston that **Jerry** had a stroke that affected the muscles on one side of his face. **Buzzy** said that **Jerry** could understand what he said to him. **Mary**, **Jerry's** wife, said that they were doing 10 weeks of therapy twice a week and **Jerry** is doing well. In fact, they expect him to be back at 100% of the same old **Jerry**! **Jerry's** phone number is 781-545-4734.

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Little Red Herrings — Occupy Wall Street

by **Mark Y. Herring** (Dean of Library Services, Dacus Library, Winthrop Univ.) <herringm@winthrop.edu>



Perhaps someone can help me with this. Since the discovery of a library at the "Occupy Wall Street" site in New York, the library press has been nothing short of gaga. Like Neanderthals discovering fire, the library press has been all atwitter about the library, books, donations to same, and, of course, the destruction — OMG, no, please say it isn't so! — of said library when the police moved in. Never in my thirty years in this profession have I seen more ink spilled on so narrow an event in general, and in the library press in specific. Granted, librarians are probably slightly more politically left than they are to the right, but even that doesn't quite explain the insatiable interest in a fringe movement.

Now I do understand the movement, and I get that these folks are very upset about corporations "making out like bandits." What I don't get comes down to two things: one, what do they hope to accomplish; and, two, why is a library all that unusual or even newsworthy?

The what-do-they-hope-to-accomplish part is really puzzling to me. I thought one of the points was the massive and unnecessary spending by corporations. I got that the first few days. We're now going on ninety days, so what's the other point? Corporate greed is always an easy target, but it isn't new. Is there something else? It can't be the banking bailouts, as Congress, more than anyone else, is responsible for that. It can't be the housing mess either, as, again, Congress is the culprit. Maybe there should be an "Occupy

Congress" movement? Perhaps it is the recent interest on the cost of a college education. If so, are we advocating occupying college grounds?

So far this movement has cost American cities \$13 million, and more is being added daily. Yes, of course, free speech and the right to protest are very much a part of the American warp and woof of freedom. But does that include a "right" to tear up public property in the process? Furthermore, the group has not exactly patterned itself after **Gandhi's** passive resistance of late, as fighting is now taking place at more than one location. And it isn't just with the police, but with other participants. In Zuccotti Park, for example, they had to set up a "safety tent" for women being groped by fellow (or felon) occupiers. I won't mention the outbreaks of lice.

The second part of the question is a bit more germane to librarians. Is it really unusual for a library to develop among scores and scores of people sitting about on public property all day with nothing to do? Wouldn't it be *more* unusual had one *not* emerged? Personally, I don't go anywhere without a book. Even when stuck in traffic I pick up whatever I'm reading while waiting for the unsnarling, and I began this habit long before I became a librarian. Wouldn't thousands of folks with nothing to do but sit about all day find reading natural? Not everyone there has a smartphone or an eBook reader either, so naturally print books should, and did, emerge.

And yet none of this explains why so much ink has been spilled about this library. I'm glad

the library is there, and I'm glad these folks are reading. I hope some of the books have to do with economics, and democratic capitalism, too. Perhaps their reading will help them understand why running up a \$40,000 college debt on street theatre and puppetry may not yield the highest career return, but that's not exactly Wall Street's fault.

This leads me to a final observation. Is this the movement to which the library profession should suddenly attach itself? I understand that librarians have something of a chip on their shoulders about their image and will do almost anything to be seen as something other than librarians. But seriously, is this Marxist-laden movement the right one? Given that our future largely depends on "evil" corporations like **Microsoft**, **Apple**, **Wal-Mart**, **Sears**, and **McDonald's** (not to mention many of those 1%) throwing a few dollars our way, should we be so quick to bite the hand that feeds us, or feeds our organizations? I'm not advocating a pass for corporations, but we can't be like the guy who shot his parents and then threw himself on the mercy of the court because he was an orphan.

It's hardly fun, I know, but perhaps we should take a breath and occupy reality for a bit? At the very least, can we all agree that libraries are not all that unusual, and their emergence is as natural a part of life as eating and drinking? 🐼