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Occupy Wall Street

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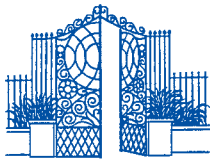
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Pelikan's Antidisambiguation

from page 8

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. 🐼

Rumors

from page 6

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.

continued on page 20

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? 🐼