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The Future of Reading

By Don Keesey
(English)

Your friendly booksellers at Amazon are inviting you to view on the Web a six-minute video touting the second edition of their e-book reader, the Kindle 2. Unlike its competitor from Sony, the Kindle doesn't even pretend to look like a book. Eight by five inches and a third of an inch thick, it looks like what it is—a tablet. The screen displays a sharp black text against a white background and the print size (though not yet the contrast) can be adjusted to your comfort. If you're still not comfortable, you can sit back, turn on the sound, and have the device read the text to you. This little tablet is able to store 1,500 e-books and if these don't include the text you want at the moment, you can wirelessly download any of Amazon's tens of thousands of e-books, magazines, and newspapers. The Kindle also includes a dictionary. This, alas, is not yet the massive and marvelous Oxford English Dictionary but its anemic cousin, the Oxford American which, among other shortcomings, is skimpy on etymologies. But it's only a matter of time.

Of course you'll have to pay for your portable library and for anything else you download from Amazon, and at 10 bucks a book this can add up. But meanwhile, Google and several university consortia are steadily working toward their goal of putting all printed texts into digital form. I have no idea how the economics of all this will shake out, but I'm convinced the day cannot be far off when you will be able to sit down with your tablet and access the entire Library of Congress by pressing a few buttons. So accept the invitation to view the Kindle and you will see the future of reading.

You will also see the death of the book as we know it. I find this prospect at once exciting, depressing, and decidedly bemusing. But I can't decide which muse is chiefly at work. Is it Tragedy or Comedy? Surely Memory has her hand in as well. In short, I have mixed feelings. Those of us who have haunted libraries and have lived surrounded by books will have our physical and mental landscapes seriously deranged. It is depressing to imagine a world in which the physical book has largely disappeared and our great libraries have become mausoleums. Yet certainly they will have no additions. Already everything that gets printed is created first in cyberspace. Very soon we will just skip the print phase entirely (Stephen King is already trying this) and new books will be printed on paper only at the behest of wealthy eccentrics like those Renaissance nobles who insisted on elegant handwritten copies even after printed texts became available.

But then, as that example reminds us, the book as we know it hasn’t been around forever. What we call a book is a gathering of sheets of

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President’s Message

The Future of Reading

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Weaving will save a lot of paper, a word that goes back to the Ancients’ papyrus, the plant they cut into strips and then wove into flat sheets on which they wrote their texts. Text itself, a word long favored among literary theorists to emphasize the written aspects of language and to foreground the intertextuality or interwoven features of all discourse, can be traced to an Indo-European root that gives us both the Greek techne (art or skill) and the Latin texere (generally, to fabricate, technically, to weave). Now it has again become a verb, and some of us are texting all the time, even (shudder) while driving. But if our airy texts no longer have the fabric of fine papyrus, or even the texture of coarse newsprint, they have the advantage that they can be easily woven into that long scroll in cyberspace. (Cyber is also a lot of fun—look it up.) This is the task of the modern webster (feminine) or webber (masculine), variants of the more common weaver, who ply their virtual looms to fabricate the World Wide Web. And a wondrous web it is. Soon, I predict, you will be able to prop your tablet before you, arrange the light and font to your taste, set your automatic scroll to your preferred speed, and—if you can resist turning over every other word to see what’s underneath—read any text you want, hands free. The future of the book is definitely dim, but the future of reading looks to be (adjustably) bright.

It’s That Time Of Year!

The EFA Executive Board is looking for members who might be interested in serving with the organization. The Board meets on campus from 10:00am to noon, on the first Monday of each month, except June, July, August and January. The meetings are casual, dealing primarily with maintaining the association and planning events for the membership. The offices to be filled this term are as follows: Vice President (to serve as President in 2010-11); Secretary; an Academic Senate representative; and one Member-at-Large. In addition, the Nominations Committee will recommend to the Board appointments to the Ex Officio positions listed in the box to the left. If you might like to be a candidate for any of these positions, please email Bobbye Gorenberg at drbobbyedg@yahoo.com for details. Do so by the easy-to-remember date of April 15.

At the Spring Luncheon, which doubles as our annual EFA Business Meeting, a slate of candidates will be recommended to the members in attendance. Nominations are also open to the floor at that time.
February's Academic Senate report

By Ted Norton

This was a short meeting. Although I was entitled to vote as the stand-in EFA senator, there was very little to vote on. Not one resolution was proposed.

President Whitmore said he hoped that the upcoming federal stimulus bill would provide for increases in Pell grant and work-study funds for students and, perhaps, give us some money for construction. He also reported that since Provost Carmen Sigler is retiring in May, the formation of a Provost search committee has begun and the search for a Chief Information Officer on campus is underway.

In the Senate itself, the College of Education has lost a Senate seat and the College of Business has gained one.

The Library Board reported that San Jose city councilman Pete Constant was still trying to protect children from pornography on library computers, and that they were watching him closely.

The Senate heard a lengthy report on the Chancellor’s edict that all classroom materials and instruction-related university websites must be made accessible to disabled students. Our plan for compliance has been approved, and real progress has been made. Faculty members are encouraged to attend weekly Faculty Development workshops and information on instructional materials for each college is now available, with personalized assistance.

For some time the faculty has complained that BOGS had made GE assessment and re-certification procedures too complex and time-consuming, and that its decisions were often arbitrary. As a result, a GE Assessment task force was established last year and it has now announced that those processes have been simplified and streamlined and will be geared to the five-year, program-planning cycle. Going forward, if departments disagree with the actions of BOGS regarding GE, they may appeal to the Curriculum and Research Committee.

To deal with the problem of salary increases for faculty who have reached the top step of their pay grade, the Senate voted on members of a Post-Promotion Increase Appeals Committee.

In addition, to assist in SJU's attempts to cope with our current enrollment problems, the President proposed four faculty members, to be approved by the Senate, for an Enrollment Management Advisory Group.

Provost Carmen Sigler reported that a search committee to replace incumbent Bob Cooper as AAVP of Undergraduate Studies had started its work. Cooper plans to return to teaching. She said also that all sabbaticals approved this year had been funded.

I voted twice, once to approve the Minutes; once to approve the Enrollment Management nominees.

Good news from the Academic Senate in March

By Peter Buzanski

It was somewhat surprising in this time of economic crisis to be given good news in the March Academic Senate meeting, but that is what dominated the session.

First, President Jon Whitmore told us of his trip to Washington, D.C. the previous week, where he was informed of the various funds for higher education included in the Congressional stimulus package. Pell grants are being increased for the next two years, along with more money for work-study programs. Loan funds, called Stafford grants, will aid more low income students and additional funds for research, based on peer grant reviews, are also in the law.

Additional good news was contained in the Campus Athletics Board report. The Senate learned that the National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA) in 2003 imposed stricter standards for Division I-A institutions than had been the case previously. Under those revised standards, points are awarded for higher eligibility requirements, for academic achievement within a narrow time frame, and for improved retention and graduation rates. The system is very complex but NCAA requires that each athletic category maintain a 925 point minimum. Any number short of that results in sanctions which include loss of scholarships, plus penalties that may negatively affect a university's win-loss records, and jeopardize its post-season play-off or bowl games.

In 2003, SJSU was far below 925 points in most sports. In 2008-2009, no SJSU team is below 925. The exact number, now known to the Campus Athletics Board, may not be revealed until the NCAA announcement on May 7, but the Board basked in its glory, telling the Senate that we will all be proud on May 7.

Yet another piece of positive news was the announcement that the one-night fund raiser, Beach Blanket Babylon, was successful. The performance, in memory of Steve Silver, the SJSU graduate who founded the comedy routine in San Francisco, resulted in the Fox Theatre being sold out, with 1200 people in attendance. All funds went to the Alumni Association for scholarships and other worthy causes. About $50,000 was raised by that one performance.
The Anzio Invasion:

By Lawrence Pugno
(Secondary Education)

Last September, I spent two weeks exploring the hill towns of Umbria with my traveling companion, Pat. On our way back to Rome for the flight home, we decided to visit the nearby town of Anzio which, in early 1944, had taken up three months of my life. When I had last seen it, the town was completely destroyed. My visit brought back old memories. I first landed there, 35 miles south of Rome, on January 22, 1944, in the darkness of 0200 hours. Our invasion, called Operation Shingle, was designed to open another front behind the German Gustav Line which lay farther to the south. I was the Junior Officer on a US Navy Landing Ship Tank (LST 383). Ours was the first ship into the beach at Nettuno, a short distance from Anzio. Our task was to land men and equipment, and to put down pontoons which would become platforms to serve as “floating docks” for later ships to use for unloading cargo.

Being on the first ship was nerve-wracking. If the Germans had known of our plans, we could have suffered devastating fire from their guns. Fortunately, we met no opposition. At that time of morning it was quiet and peaceful, and before the day was done we had landed 37,000 troops and more than 5000 vehicles. I recall walking peacefully along the nearby beach famous in Roman history as the site of Emperor Nero’s summer palace. By the time our ship went back to Naples to restock and return to Anzio two days later, the Germans had begun to respond with air raids that bombarded the arriving ships. From that day on, for the next three months, THINGS WENT FROM BAD TO WORSE. Over the next ten days the Germans were able to move some 9 Divisions into the Alban Hills a short distance from the beachhead and, with an unobstructed view, could begin raining artillery fire on the Allied forces there. Securing the landing zone and unloading under those circumstances was stressful, to say the least. Soldiers, nurses and cooks were under constant bombardment. The Germans brought in “Anzio Annie,” a huge railway-mounted gun that could lob massive shells onto the ships from 20 miles away. Operation Shingle proved very costly. It settled into a three-month-long stalemate, with the Allies unable to break out and German counterattacks unable to dislodge them. The Allied commander, Major General John Lucas, was severely criticized by Winston Churchill, among others, for the failure of the invasion. These critics thought the road to Rome could have been traversed in the first few days after the landing, before the Germans were able to strengthen their defenses and launch counterattacks. Lucas himself maintained that he had insufficient men and supplies to support a hurried push to Rome. Historians disagree on whether he was being made a scapegoat, or was overly-cautious, or incompetent.

After the first few days, we settled into a pattern that lasted until May, when a breakout to Rome was finally successful. Our routine was to spend a day or two loading in Naples, then making the short run to Anzio, unloading as quickly as possible, and returning to Naples. It became a schizoid life, since the time in Naples often included opera and USO entertainment. At day’s end, we would change from our grungy khakis into dress blue uniforms to spend our evenings at either the USO or British officers’ clubs. (I recall seeing Irving Berlin, (Continued on page five)
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singing his many popular song hits.)

In the three months bringing supplies to Anzio, we carried a wide variety of cargo. Besides soldiers, tanks, equipment, trucks and ammunition, we often loaded exceptional items. Once, we brought on dozens of donkeys needed by the Army to carry supplies into the Italian mountains, contrast to ours. One prisoner died a day or so after he disembarked, and because he died of typhus, we were quarantined for a week or so afterward—a nice reprieve from trips to Anzio.

I should mention two disasters that preceded the invasion of Anzio that were not publicized by the military, and were unknown to the American public. The first took place on Dec. 2, ‘43—an unexpected German air assault on the Allied-occupied port of Bari, Italy. Considered safe behind enemy lines, some 30 Allied supply ships—one of which carried mustard gas—were attacked by German JU-88 bombers in a devastating raid rivaling that of Pearl Harbor. The ship with the mustard gas was hit, releasing poison gas over the harbor and city. Estimates of the deaths vary from a few hundred to several thousand.

The disaster was kept secret and the loss of supplies had a negative impact on military operations.

The second disaster was a rehearsal, or practice invasion, of Anzio, which took place at Salerno on January 17-18, ‘44. It was a fiasco. General Lucian Truscott’s critical report stated, “No single element landed . . . on its correct beach.” The loss of life contrasted sharply with the absence of losses suffered in the actual invasion a few days later. I witnessed some of those losses.

Our ship carried several DUKWs (pronounced Ducks), large amphibious vessels that carried army personnel and their 105 Howitzers. They were launched from our lower deck through the open bow doors. It was horrible to see these DUKWs launch and then be swamped in the choppy waters within a hundred yards or so. Too many soldiers were burdened with equipment and ammunition to save themselves.

Our own ship launched three or four DUKWs that sunk, out of a total of 40 lost during the practice.

Despite these bad omens, Operation Shingle went forward.

With each trip, along with the mounting casualties, I witnessed the gradual, total destruction of Anzio. After three months our service on the beachhead finally came to an end. Our ship was recalled just a few days before the Allies were able to move on Rome. We received orders to form a convoy of ships and move from the Mediterranean to Southern England, where we would make ready for the invasion of Normandy. But that is another story.
In Memoriam

• Wilfred (Fred) Iltis (Biology,'88) died last December 11, '08. A memorial service was held for him in late January. Fred was born in 1923, in Brno, Czechoslovakia, to Anni and Hugo Iltis. His father was a biologist, like Fred, and an author of anti-Nazi books. When the Nazis threatened to invade in 1938, Fred’s family fled to the United States. He served in the South Pacific with the US Army during WW II. After the war he went on to earn his Ph.D in entomology at UC Davis. He married Julia, a graphic artist, in 1948. She preceded him in death in 2004. Fred was hired to teach in the Biology Department at SJSU in the 1960s. Along with an early two-year stint teaching in the experimental Tutorials Program, he remained in Biology until he retired in 1988. His research focus was on the biosystematics and life cycle of the mosquito. Fred enjoyed playing the guitar in his younger days and was an exceptional photographer in his later years. He is survived by his brother, Hugh Iltis, professor emeritus of botany at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and several nephews.

• Jack Crane (Dean, Humanities & Arts, '98) has just finished writing a novel on “the greatest non-military disaster in US history before 9/11”—the fire on board the steamship General Slocum, in New York City’s East River on June 15, 1904, which claimed 1200 lives.

• Jack Holland (Business, ’79) is currently residing in an Assisted Living Facility after suffering a stroke two-and-a-half years ago.

• Marjorie Craig (Counseling, ’92) returned to Mombasa, Kenya, last June to continue health and hygiene work with children. Her team has taught students at three schools, built hand-washing stations, provided food, and enjoyed the children’s enthusiasm for learning. She is looking for volunteers for this coming July. “It’s a wonderful experience,” she says.

• Virginia Patterson Maeda (widow of H. Robert Patterson, Biological Sciences, ’82) has recovered nicely from a complete knee replacement early last year in Red Bluff, CA. She felt good enough to go dancing aboard a scheduled Alaskan cruise in July with her husband Garry and good friends Henry and Beverly Robinson and Billie Cockrell. The Maedas currently live in Hawaii, and say “Aloha” to all.

• Milton Loventhal (Library, ’92) continues his work with Soviet secret documents. He is currently awaiting publication in the journal, Canadian American Slavic Studies, of an article on one of his more exciting finds—a document he authenticated, which clearly implicates Stalin in the assassination of potential rival, Sergei Kirov, in 1934. He and his wife, Dr. Jennifer McDowell, have collaborated on a book-length manuscript which is ready for publication, entitled Honor Won, Honor Lost: Top Secret Soviet Foreign Policy Documents That Hitler Used. He has been working on this project for 53 years. “Never Say Die,” he says.

• Ken McKay (Meteorology, 2000) has been serving as Assoc. Dean of the College of Tai Chi at the University of East-West Medicine, in Sunnyvale, CA. The school offers courses leading to a Masters of Tai Chi degree. It is approved by the State of California and, to Ken’s knowledge, is the only academic degree in Tai Chi offered anywhere.

• Jerry Vroom (Intercollegiate Athletics, ’84) is developing golf instruction in Japan.

• Peter Buzanski (History, ’96) and his wife, Colleen, took a three-week trip to Madrid, Majorca, Barcelona, and Andorra last summer. In Spain, they visited the Pyrite mine near Navajun. Colleen is a gemologist and wanted to visit this mine, the only one in the entire world that yields its crystals in perfect cube form.

• Julie Menendez (Physical Education) has been suffering from Alzheimer’s disease for some time and is currently being cared for at the Covenant Care facility in Gilroy. His wife, Doris, says he sleeps a lot, is in a wheelchair, and has difficulty speaking now.

• Dulio Peruzzi (Geography, ’93) spent ten days in Florence, Italy, as part of a delegation representing Santa Clara County, a sister county to the Province of Florence. Its purpose was to prepare for the exhibition, “Engineers of the Renaissance and Leonardo Da Vinci,” hosted by the San Jose Tech Museum this past year. After that, he travelled to his home town of Cortona where he lectured on his doctoral dissertation and displayed his collection of photographs showing agricultural techniques in that area from over 50 years ago. He returned to Italy later in the summer to visit his family home with his son, daughter-in-law and twin grandchildren.
Dwight Bentel’s centennial birthday

By Gene Bernardini (Editor)

On the EFA renewal form, which asks members for personal news and activities, Dwight Bentel wrote, “I'll be a hundred years old this April.” Nothing more. A simple declaration of fact. Surely, such an event for a man whose name graces the SJSU journalism building deserves recognition. I called to ask him about it. He said he thought the University was planning some sort of acknowledgement, though he wasn’t sure what. (In fact, a birthday celebration for him will take place on campus, on April 23, called “A Night for Dwight, 100 Years in Black and White.”)

For details see http://bentel100.ning.com.)

I told him I thought his EFA colleagues might be interested to know the secret of his longevity. It turns out there’s no big secret.

Just two things: good genes and good living. First, it’s important to inherit the right genes. “If your father lived to be 85, you’re on the right track,” he said. “My brother, a survivor of Pearl Harbor, is now 103, and like me eats pretty much what he darn well pleases.” Good genes are obviously important.

But how about good living? “Longevity is something you have to earn the hard way,” he said, “and you better not wait too long to start.” So what has he done to earn his long life? Exercise, maybe?

“No,” he said flatly. “What about diet? What do you eat for breakfast?” “Just oatmeal or cold cereal.” As for the rest of his day, he had nothing specific to offer. Didn’t sound as if he was working very hard at it. And then he volunteered, “before bedtime, I have a little red wine—with a small bracer—maybe vodka.” He conceded that if you avoid alcohol, which he poetically referred to as “the bubbling bottle and the sparkling glass,” it might add to your longevity. “But,” he quickly added, “are you really willing to pay such a price?” Apparently he is not.

So there it is: good genes and good living—in the Bentel manner.

The State of the Arts

By John K. Crane, Dean Emeritus

When I moved to Santa Fe, NM, permanently in 2005, I was ready to wallow in the arts. Santa Fe was the second-largest arts center in the nation, second only to New York City, though it has since fallen behind Los Angeles. I thought I would be welcomed, given my experience with all the arts in San Jose. Also, I grew up with the actress Marsha Mason, so I had a contact here to get me “in.” Alas, there were 50,000 here with my experience, and Marsha had totally forgotten about me.

That’s beside the point. The arts, always struggling, in this economy have fallen on especially hard times. The only one that seems to be doing well is the Santa Fe Opera, a summer tourist-season attraction in an open-air theater that runs for ten weeks and intersperses performances of five different operas. When it rains or the wind is especially intense, you could freeze your butt off.

But the other arts were falling for lack of donations. The Santa Fe Symphony had reduced its 12 performances a year to ten, then to eight and in 2009-10 may have to go to six. I offered to pay for the performance of Sylvia Kersenbaum, a blind pianist who is still considered the master of Tchaikovsky’s Second Piano Concerto. But the Symphony could not come up with enough money to pay the 70 other musicians who would back her up. Nor, probably, could they afford to rent the Lensic Performing Arts Center.

Next I tried to aid the New Mexico Symphony Orchestra, which performs in Albuquerque.

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(Continued from page seven) They were having a mid-season “Beethoven Festival.” So, through my friend Dana Winograd, principal cellist who plays in both orchestras, I offered them the services of the SJSU Beethoven Center. The NMSO wrestled with this for a while, then decided they could not afford the Center, though they had all heard of it and respected it. No dice.

There are many art galleries in Santa Fe—I count over a hundred—and other than the famous ones—The Georgia O’Keefe Gallery, for example—they are all selling less art these days than before and some are closing down. There are at least two dozen well-known bookstores here, specialized ones, and most are trying to make a go it. (Having just written a novel, this concerns me.) Restaurants, some of the best in the world, are fighting their own high prices (typical) and the higher price of gasoline (atypical).

Now before you all cancel your summer visits to Santa Fe, please know that we want you. Do we ever! But I am writing about the state of the arts in America, not only in Santa Fe. I’ve heard the U. S. Budget allocates more to the Marine Corps Band than to the National Endowment for the Arts, at least under the last administration and the current one has been left deeply in debt by that one. Things are not likely to improve for quite a while.

The problem is that the majority of Americans seem to consider the arts lagniappe rather than necessities. Can you imagine France, Italy, or even Russia thinking in such a way? The arts thrived under Czar Nicholas II—Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Chekhov, the Bolshoi Ballet, Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninov, Rimsky-Korsakov—but unfortunately the czar and his whole family were assassinated in 1918.

My request is that you donate to and attend the arts in San Jose. Mayors Tom McEnery and Susan Hammer were of great assistance to me during the ten years I was Dean. Obviously educators and people who are “loaded” (not educators) are going to have to rescue the arts in this country for the foreseeable future.