

“The Throne”

Campus kudos for a unique library newsletter

by Pat Van Zandt

Who would have thought that a publication mounted only in bathroom stalls in the main library would become the most popular library publication (and one of the most popular publications overall) on campus? But that's what happened with “The Throne,” an irregular newsletter issued by the staff of Swem Library of the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia.

The idea for “The Throne” was shamelessly borrowed from *Stall Talk* of the University of Virginia Libraries. A Swem librarian attending a meeting there discovered a copy in the ladies room and took the idea back to her supervisors, who gave her permission to give it a try. After much brainstorming, the staff came up with the title of the publication to honor King William III and Queen Mary II, who chartered the college in 1693 (making it the second college in the American colonies). A logo of William and Mary on their respective thrones graces the masthead of each issue.

“The Throne” always showcases one or two interesting print or electronic resources available to William and Mary students. Other features have included brief (and always humorous and light-

hearted) articles on famous librarians in history, including the Brothers Grimm, Casanova, and St. Jerome, as well as librarians in the movies (as in *Party Girl* and *Desk Set*). One issue invited readers to respond to an online survey about their favorite bathroom reading, with results featured in the next issue. The presence of a full-time graphic designer on Swem Library's staff assures that each colorful issue of “The Throne” is visually as well as intellectually appealing.

We knew that “The Throne” was becoming popular when one of the editors was conducting a bibliographic instruction session. While waiting for the online catalog to bring back search results, she asked the students if they knew how many items the catalog had to look through. When one student tentatively answered, “About a million,” she asked how he knew that figure. The answer: “I read it in ‘The Throne!’” Other students in the class chimed in with “We love ‘The Throne!’” Since then, a student newspaper survey has voted the Swem Library bathrooms the best on campus, stating that “what really sets these particular bathrooms above all the rest is the including of a ... newsletter,

About the author

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The Throne



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Featured Librarian in History:

Jean-Jacques Chevalier de Seingalt, Otherwise known as Casanova
Casanova's reputation primarily rests on his legendary status as seducer of women and sometimes men. He described his erotic adventures in his *History of My Life*, written in the eighteenth century, but not published in its entirety until the 1960s (if you want to read the details, it's available in Swem stacks at D2B5.3 .C4A313 1997).

Casanova, born in 1725 in Venice, was a soldier, spy, diplomat, writer, musician, adventurer, briefly and surprisingly a seminarian, and, during the later years of his life from 1786 until his death in 1798, librarian at the castle of Count Waldstein in Dux, in what is now the Czech Republic. Prior to his library position, Casanova had relied on personal charm to win influence, and on gambling and intrigue to support himself. In fact, he introduced the lottery in 1757, which made him a millionaire. Exiled from his homeland by politics, his isolated life as a librarian was not a happy one, and he was not in good health. Fortunately, his professional duties were not taxing. He had time to travel quite a bit, most notably to Prague where he met Mozart and may have inspired the libretto of *Don Giovanni* (whose main character was a rogue much like Casanova himself). He also had time to write; he began, but never finished, his autobiography, in order "to keep from going mad or dying of grief." His last words were, "I have lived as a philosopher, and die as a Christian."



Resource:

Evans Digital Edition Series I. Evans 1629-1800

When it is complete in two years, the Evans Digital Edition will provide web access to the full text of every extant book, pamphlet, and broadside published in America from 1629-1800. The source for the collection is Charles Evans's fourteen-volume *American Bibliography: A Chronological Dictionary of All Books, Pamphlets, and Periodical Publications Printed in the United States of America From the Genesis of Printing in 1639 Down to and Including the Year 1800...* (Chicago: the author, 1903-1939) as well as the supplement compiled by Roger Bristol in 1970. The American Antiquarian Society and the publisher leadex, who are collaborating on the project, will issue segments in monthly intervals according to Evans number. The first segment was added to the Swem database in August 2002.

Eastern European Papers



At first glance, the contents of *Eastern European Papers* by James Lamar Weygand (Private Peas of the Indiana Kid, 1970) may surprise you. The thin volume is hardly conspicuous. The subtle humor of the title becomes apparent once you open the book. A humorous travel account of Eastern Europe, this tome highlights the region's **talent paper**, complete with samples. The author toured Moscow, Leningrad, Warsaw, Bucharest, Budapest, Vienna, Prague, Dresden, and Berlin to bring these tissues to light, many of which resemble other paper products, including wrapping paper, note paper, and fine-grain sandpaper. One can only hope that conditions have improved since 1970, but these samples definitely make you appreciate the finer points of capitalism: Charmin, Northern Quilted, Cottonelle, and Scott. Swem Library owns one of only 65 copies printed. You can see this book for yourself by visiting Special Collections, located in the Swem Library Annex, in Toronto, VA. Call 253-4841 for more details. Or see www.swem.wm.edu/5mCall/.

DID YOU KNOW ?

Academic librarians answer 97 million reference questions each year—almost three times the attendance at college football games.

Americans go to school, public, and academic libraries more than twice as often as they go to the movies.

'The Throne,' that covers all sorts of hygiene and library trivia" (*The Flat Hat*, February 14, 2003, p. 14).

"The Throne" is an excellent example of how a small idea, given encouragement, can pay big dividends. "The Throne" is only distributed within library bathrooms, so actual publication cost (paper and plastic wall-mounted covers) is less than \$30 per month. However, the value of positive publicity for library services and staff, combined with the opportunity to provide entertainment and enlightenment to patrons, is priceless.

"The Throne" began publication in June 2002 and continues on a more-or-less bimonthly basis. Current editors and writers of "The Throne" are Pat Van Zandt and Cyndi Mack (replacing Jessica Fischer); graphic designer is Karen McCluney. Other staff contribute articles on occasion. ■

Hot off the press from ACRL: New publications on digital reference and assessment

Digital Reference Research Agenda

The Digital Reference Research Agenda, Publications in Librarianship no. 55, a compilation of the proceedings of the Digital Reference Research Symposium held in August 2002, is now available from ACRL. Included are detailed chapters on specific aspects of the agenda, including how digital reference relates to digital libraries, education for digital reference, question negotiation online, and the unique costs and benefits of digital reference. Current thinking and research in digital reference are drawn together to create a bridge between researchers and practitioners. Edited by R. David Lankes, Scott Nicholson, and Abby Goodrum. \$24.00, 195p. ISBN. 0-8389-8231-X, 2003.


Assessing Student Learning Outcomes

Well done assessment is essential to documenting the effects of information literacy programs and the degree to which they are meeting their objectives. The assessment process can also assist anyone involved in information lit-

eracy instruction by getting them actively involved in the process and engaged in classroom activities, giving them feedback about students' thinking and learning, and helping them focus on goals and objectives of the course. *Assessing Student Learning Outcomes for Information Literacy Instruction in Academic Institutions* by Elizabeth Fuseler Avery gives librarians the tools needed to create baseline data that will support the merits of information literacy programs in their institutions. Methods and skills that have been used to carry out effective assessment programs are illustrated, including deciding what is to be learned from the program, establishing learning outcomes, data analysis, consideration of costs, and involvement of faculty. \$29.00, 308 p. ISBN. 0-8389-8261-1, 2003.

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