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Charley's Corner:

Some Rooneyisms

by Charles R. Dyer, Director of Libraries, San Diego County Public Law Library

Nothing in this column represents the view of my Library or its Board of Trustees. These are just my personal opinions.

Just recently, I have had occasion to have several communications with our fearless SCCLL SIS newsletter editor, Lisa Mecklenberg Jackson. Since Lisa has not assigned a theme for this issue of the newsletter, I shall fill this void of a column with a little navel-watching—in other words, a column about my column.

When Lisa let me create this column, I told her it was to be an opinionated curmudgeonly piece. I was wishing to sound like Herbert White, although I seem to sound more like Andy Rooney. I had told her that I wished the column would be printed near the back of the newsletter, perhaps on the last page. I wished to have a permanent location, somewhat like George Will in *Newsweek* or the last page of the *Spectrum* or, yes indeed, like Andy Rooney. Yet, she usually places it rather early in the issue, either because I send it in earlier than her other writers or because she likes it. (“Charley, yours is one of the better articles, and I like to showcase it.”) She should be a politician. My point is that, like most writers, I have a pride of authorship and a concern for the “look” of the piece.

Now, she goes and tells us on the SCCLL SIS list serve that she is trying to get most of us to accept the newsletter in online form, rather than paper. Saves money. I posted a number of real concerns on the list serve, which she dutifully answered. But here, in my own column, which she never edits, unless this sentence isn't here, but how would you know if it isn't, here I can write about what really bugs me. I want my stuff in real paper!! The wonderful booklet format she just started a little while ago makes my columns look so good. Now, it's going to be reduced to computer screen, or worse, a printout where the line breaks are all wrong. Argh.

While feeling frankly miserable about this, I received an email from my wife. Just playing around, she had entered my name in some search engine and came upon an article I didn't know about. AALL Executive Director Roger Parent had quoted me and several other law librarians in a speech to the 1998 IFLA Conference. <http://ifla.inist.fr/IV/ifla64/186-88e.htm>. So now I have this vision of my own columns (which will be retained forever!) showing up in people's screens whenever they want (or don't want) just by entering my name. Fame spread far and wide. Maybe I was too hasty to condemn the newfangled ways.

Soon, I intend to footnote my columns with video clips. Instead of the usual boldface or italics, I'll use colored fonts. I'll insert my photo as a JPEG, but when people click on it to make it bigger, it'll go to my home cam and show me live in the bathtub. (Trust me. That requires a big picture.) I will assume that everyone is reading them on their computers, rather than in hard

copy. More likely, people will read them on their cell phones and wrist watches. Yes, the mad curmudgeon has gone madder still.

On to other fancies. Several months ago, we booked David Broder, the *Washington Post* reporter, to come to San Diego to lecture on the California initiative process on December 8, 2000. This thing took planning, as it was a joint operation between four different organizations and required attendees to pay \$30 each beforehand for the luncheon. We wanted him in late October, but he said he had to remain in Washington to cover the elections. December 8 would be far enough afterward that he could leave DC with ease. All the post-election hoopla would be over by then. No problem, right? (Now we are tentatively re-scheduled for February, but we've decided not to confirm with the 160 paid attendees until after the next president is sworn in. Just playing it safe.) (This column was written on December 11, at which time the election outcome had not been determined. I sincerely hope that it is determined by the time you read this.)

For those of you who read my last column, and liked it, you may be pleased to know that the 2001 AALL Annual Meeting Program Committee accepted my proposed program. It's 75 minutes on Wednesday (I think in the afternoon). Speaking will be nationally (perhaps internationally) renowned library consultant Dick Boss, former law librarian Dean Roberta Shaffer of the University of Texas Graduate School of Library and Information Science, and the inimitable Professor Bob Berring of UC Berkeley. I am the coordinator and moderator. Lucky me. Other than the general theme of the meeting, "New Realities: New Roles," I don't have a clue about what they will be talking about—and neither do they. These three seminal thinkers will present to you whatever is on their minds as of the day of the program. We are months away from the AALL meeting, and things change so fast. These three have the opportunity to clue you in on those important trends of that moment. You wanted an excuse to stay over for the Closing Banquet. Now, you've got it. (Those of you who didn't like my last column, well, you don't have to come to the Final Banquet.)

At the recent California Library Association Conference I learned that 60 percent of the librarians who graduated from California library school since 1995 have as a major portion of their job description web site design and maintenance. Either everybody is now doing websites, or we are letting the kids have all the fun. I wish it were the former, but I fear it is the latter. Maybe all us older ones should create our own personal websites, at least so that we know something about the time involved. I also fear that we are several years away from adequate management controls on time lost on website work. We're back to the days when everyone did original cataloging.

Lastly, I heard a recent report that they are finishing a prototype of the hover-car. This is the personal car like the Jetsons fly that can go straight up like a helicopter and land on a dime. The development costs are huge, but they expect mass production in about ten years. I've been thinking about those sci-fi movies wherein the skies are crowded with cars crossing every which way. So, presuming they develop the computerized rapid response radar systems that could steer in such an environment, I've got two huge questions: If we don't need streets for cars anymore,

will we start building out over the street easements? There's some land use law for you. Presuming these things will be lighter than our current cars, will we start parking on the roof? I have this vision of a fifty-foot book drop. (Pardon me. I mean electronic book drop, or DVD drop or whatever.) You may think I am just speculating, but these are serious questions for me. At the speed that San Diego County develops public buildings, it'll be ten years before I get that new Main Library built. I sure could use that space on the streets.