

My Cup of Tea

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TODAY'S SUBJECT: Flaps du jour

SINCE WE have several flaps going on now there may not be sufficient space to cover the whole bouquet in one journal, so I will begin with a simple definition of flap: **something that causes an uproar.**

One current flap that seems to have some members of one group agitated beyond all reason (in my opinion), and some members of the other group agitated to a lesser degree but still enough to generate regularly expressed slings and arrows, is **electronic journals.**

Among the arguments that I have heard in opposition to e-journals is that acceptance of these journals will mean the end of the ajoy bundle, and ultimately the end of ajoy itself. Presumably, if e-journals become an

acceptable means of publishing, **everyone who publishes will abandon hardcopy and go electronic.** If there is logic in that assumption, it has escaped me. It seems more logical to me that a publisher who does letterpress because he loves it will continue to do letterpress because he loves it. Those who feel that electronic publishing will doom amateur journalism have little faith in the hobby that has already survived the ups and downs of history for more than twelve decades.

Another argument (which astounds me) is that electronic journals do not fit the definition of “journal.” My dictionary defines it as a record of something and does not specify a requirement as to how it is recorded. I find no fault with those who stress the importance of being able to “feel” and to “sense” the qualities of the printed word—I appreciate those same qualities, but not every publication will be worthy of preservation, and I would prefer to print only ones that I consider important, and to print those on quality paper. Electronic journals allow for this sort of discrimination. The fact that **e-journals may be printed by anyone who so desires** has not been addressed in any arguments that I have heard. Why not?

When I hear a remark to the effect that e-journals are not available to all members, and therefore are not acceptable, I wonder if anyone really believes that. I am certain that any ajayer who was sufficiently interested, could obtain a copy, therefore, it really is a matter of choice whether everyone reads e-journals or not. I suspect that among the silent majority of our groups, a lamentable percentage do not read the bundles, just as they do not publish, do not write, do not vote and do not attend conventions. Nor do they care a fig whether e-journals are accepted.

So where does that leave us? It leaves us like small children in a large sandbox where some want to play one game; some another game, and **no one wants any new players nor any new games.** Isn't it time we began acting like the adults we are?

The fact is that nothing remains the same forever—change occurs whether we're agreeable or not. If amateur journalism dies it will be because everyone lost interest—not because of computers or e-journals or the decline of monthly bundles.

Instead of engaging in sarcastic remarks or doomsday predictions, why can't we be enthusiastic practitioners of a fun hobby—and do it the way that suits us without denying someone else the right to practice it as they see fit? Petty squabbles reveal petty people, and that is far beneath the standards of behavior that should accrue to every ajayer that I have met—we are a group of people unique in our interest in this marvelous hobby and to engage ourselves in childlike behavior over matters of no great importance is shameful.

I hope to meet friends in Scottsdale and to leave there having made new friends. My personal feeling is that the importance of a friend far exceeds the value of an argument over something that no one will remember in years to come. I believe that a gentleman can debate an issue without becoming less than a gentleman—don't you? #

The flour is the important thing, not the mill; the fruits of philosophy, not the philosophy itself. When we ask what time it is we don't want to know how watches are constructed.

--G. C. Lichtenberg (1742-1799)
German physicist, writer