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Subject: Pournelle Column this month  
Posted by [jss](#) on Tue, 17 Sep 2013 18:40:01 GMT  
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Message-ID:  
Date: Tue, 5-Feb-85 02:01:49 EST  
Article-I.D.: sjuvax.801  
Posted: Tue Feb 5 02:01:49 1985  
Date-Received: Fri, 8-Feb-85 00:45:33 EST  
Organization: Saint Josephs Univ. Phila., Pa.  
Lines: 26

[Aren't you hungry...?]

The last time this subject came up I remained quiet. I honestly didn't agree with much of what was being said, but this month's column has got me steamed. Pournelle begins by talking about the flood of cruddy computer books (admitting - to give him credit where due - that he has a vested interest). He proceeds to advise people to go to the major bookstores and special order the books they can't find, and also to look at the books on the shelves and see to it that the store managers learn which publishers are publishing shlock.

Now, I agree that the vast majority of technical book sales to laymen occurs in large bookstores, and what he says makes sense. Unfortunately, the rest of the description is a not so subtle plug for his publisher, Baen Books. To partially quote:

"By 'bad books' I mean those that are poorly edited, filled with typos and misspelled words, crammed with jargon..." (Chaos Manor - Feb 85 Byte)

I'll buy all of that. And Pournelle, as usual, goes on to write a technical and jargon filled column. Most of the time I find his writing style refreshing, but the hypocrisy this month was a little much.

I plan to write to the editor, and to Jerry, and complain. I would be curious to see how others feel about this month's column.

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Subject: Re: Pournelle Column this month  
Posted by [geller](#) on Tue, 17 Sep 2013 18:40:10 GMT  
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Message-ID:

Date: Thu, 7-Feb-85 12:42:30 EST  
Article-I.D.: rlgvax.432  
Posted: Thu Feb 7 12:42:30 1985  
Date-Received: Sat, 9-Feb-85 07:58:35 EST  
References:  
Organization: CCI Office Systems Group, Reston, VA  
Lines: 15

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What do you think writing to the editor will accomplish. Had the article been maligning, pugnacious, or libelous then I might agree that a letter to the editor would be warranted. But if its just to complain that you don't like his style of writing then it might be easier to just not read his column! SAVE A PIECE OF PAPER AND A PIECE OF A TREE (unless you write to Byte via The Source or something).

David P. Geller

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Subject: Re: Pournelle Column this month  
Posted by [ian](#) on Tue, 17 Sep 2013 18:40:15 GMT  
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Message-ID:  
Date: Sat, 9-Feb-85 17:27:56 EST  
Article-I.D.: loral.785  
Posted: Sat Feb 9 17:27:56 1985  
Date-Received: Mon, 11-Feb-85 04:02:41 EST  
References:  
Reply-To: [ian@loral.UUCP](mailto:ian@loral.UUCP) (Ian Kaplan)  
Organization: Loral Instrumentation, San Diego  
Lines: 26  
Keywords: disgusting, Pournelle  
Summary:

I too was rather disgusted by Pournelle pushing his own books once again. The assumption was that his books are much better than all that other trash. I have not read them so I can not say, but I think it is a bad

idea for an author to throw stones like this. It is nearly impossible for a author to tell how good her/his book really is. All one can say is that you worked hard on it and made it the best book you could under the circumstances.

I did write Pournelle and the editors of Byte to complain about Pournelle's constant self promotion. He basically said that he did not feel that it was unethical and that he would continue to promote his books in his column. It seems clear to me that Bytes vaunted conflict of interest policy is not followed that closely when it comes to a popular author like Pournelle.

Ian Kaplan  
Loral Data Flow Group  
Loral Instrumentation  
(619) 560-5888 x4812  
USENET: {ucbvax,ihnp4}!sdccsvax!sdcc6!lorallian  
ARPA: sdcc6!lorallian@UCSD  
USPS: 8401 Aero Dr. San Diego, CA 92123

The opinions expressed here are my own and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of those who own this VAX.

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Subject: Re: Pournelle Column this month  
Posted by [mpackard](#) on Tue, 17 Sep 2013 18:40:34 GMT  
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Message-ID:  
Date: Sun, 10-Feb-85 13:49:00 EST  
Article-I.D.: uok.22300011  
Posted: Sun Feb 10 13:49:00 1985  
Date-Received: Wed, 13-Feb-85 04:19:12 EST  
References:  
Lines: 10  
Nf-ID: #R:sjuvax:-80100:uok:22300011:000:421  
Nf-From: uok!mpackard Feb 10 12:49:00 1985

+

He forgets that most of us have to buy our computerware (sp?) and are not as priveleged as him. Of course his position has caused him to sound like a snob to us little people. But I must say I never met him and most peoples writing does not

match the way they speak, so I suspect he is probably a nice guy. The title of his column should probably be retitled "The pournelle family mailbox, and what we threw away".

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Subject: Re: Re: Pournelle Column this month  
Posted by [al](#) on Tue, 17 Sep 2013 18:40:35 GMT  
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Message-ID:  
Date: Mon, 11-Feb-85 18:41:13 EST  
Article-I.D.: mot.94  
Posted: Mon Feb 11 18:41:13 1985  
Date-Received: Wed, 13-Feb-85 07:36:56 EST  
References: ,  
Organization: Motorola Microsystems, Phoenix AZ  
Lines: 25

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>to Byte via The Source or something).  
>  
> David P. Geller  
Why wouldn't an editor or an author be interested in readers' feedback on  
the quality of the material in the magazine? He should be.  
(In this case ESPECIALLY if he is concerned with saving trees).

-----  
Alan Filipski, UNIX group, Motorola Microsystems, Tempe, AZ U.S.A  
{seismo | ihnp4 } ! ut-sally ! oakhill ! mot ! al  
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Are we having fun yet, Zippy?

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Subject: Re: Pournelle Column this month  
Posted by [jimb](#) on Tue, 17 Sep 2013 18:40:36 GMT  
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Message-ID:  
Date: Wed, 13-Feb-85 00:27:54 EST  
Article-I.D.: amd.970  
Posted: Wed Feb 13 00:27:54 1985  
Date-Received: Wed, 13-Feb-85 07:42:19 EST  
References:  
Reply-To: [jimb@amd.UUCP](mailto:jimb@amd.UUCP) (Jim Budler)  
Organization: AMD MOSCAD  
Lines: 46  
Summary:

In article [jss@sjuvax.UUCP](mailto:jss@sjuvax.UUCP) (J. Shapiro) writes:

>[Aren't you hungry...?]

>

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>curious to see how others feel about this month's column.

Having spent several hours going over the computer bookshelves of several bookstores, including Computer Literacy, a computer bookstore, trying to glean the wheat from the chaff, and finding 90% chaff, I agree with what he said and took his plug with better spirit than you did.

For every good book on any given computer subject there are many very poor

books on the same subject that will confound the beginning computer person. How many introducing Macintosh books were there? (IBM PC|Commodore 64|Microsoft Basic|Lotus 1-2-3|...). How many of each were any good? (0|1).

What's wrong with someone pointing out a known bad situation and then saying he has an answer? A plug? So what. Didn't Osborne plug his answer, Bill Gates his answer (Microsoft Books), Lotus their answer?

--

Jim Budler  
Advanced Micro Devices, Inc.  
(408) 749-5806  
UUCPnet: {ucbvax,decwrl,ihnp4,allegra,intelca}!amd!jimb  
Compuserve: 72415,1200

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Subject: Re: Pournelle Column this month  
Posted by [ignatz](#) on Wed, 18 Sep 2013 20:42:54 GMT  
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Message-ID:  
Date: Thu, 21-Feb-85 15:55:58 EST  
Article-I.D.: aicchi.377  
Posted: Thu Feb 21 15:55:58 1985  
Date-Received: Sun, 24-Feb-85 01:25:55 EST  
References:  
Reply-To: [ignatz@aicchi.UUCP](mailto:ignatz@aicchi.UUCP) (Ihnat)  
Organization: Analysts International Corp; Chicago Branch  
Lines: 43  
Keywords: Pournelle, Reference Texts

Actually, I agree with Jerry on this. It used to be that I could walk into, say, Kroch's and Brentano's, even, and find Knuth's books. True, the computer section was only one set of shelves, but at least solid reference texts were available.

Today, any bookstore has a computer section that's longer than the latest Cadillac, and just as senseless for me to peruse. I \*don't\* want to read any one of the 30 books on "Getting More From Your Apple Basic", etc., ad nauseum. Yes, yes--before you all come to the defense of the poor beginner, I understand that everyone has to start somewhere. But so damn' many of these things are crap, and so many are published, that relatively few solid reference texts for someone like me ever seem to make it to the shelves. I belong to the Computer Science Book Club, mainly because they never pay any attention to my cancellation letters. Most books from them, while

masquerading as serious CS texts, are just one level above GMFYAB-- "How To Get More From CICS". Fer cripes sakes, I even saw a title the other day on "Software Defect Removal". Yep. Good, old debugging now has a nice title. (All of this isn't even to mention how obsolete many of the texts the LofCS offers tend to be...) And what with the ACM and its SIGS having an increasing S/N ration, only the IEEE Computer Society journal seems to be publishing decent timely stuff anymore.

How about it?? Does anyone have a reasonable source for someone who's years out of school, looking for treatises and reference texts in areas such as AI, network theory, etc., that don't have assignment problems in the back and the word "Elementary" tacked on the front? Any other professional publications that aren't forums for someone to publish minor, derivative works to satisfy their "Publish or Perish" requirements??

Sheesh, this started out as a comment and ended up as a flame...ah, well, I'll leave it in this group. I haven't been in contact for a while, so the mail telling me I'm posting this in the wrong place will prove that I've still got two-way communication with the net...

"The next contract requires you to use RSX-11-M..."  
"Uhhh...."

--

Dave Ihnat  
Analysts International Corporation  
(312) 882-4673  
ihnp4!aicchilignatz