

**AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION 2006 ANNUAL CONFERENCE
ALA PRESIDENT'S PROGRAM
SUNDAY, JUNE 25, 2006
3:30-5:30 P.M.**

PRESIDENT MICHAEL GORMAN PRESIDING

>> PRES. MICHAEL GORMAN: Good afternoon. I'm sorry for the delay in starting, but we have to deal with the logistics of the Morial Convention Center. The other day I held a Forum on International Library Education and pointed out that our guests had come from very far away: from Singapore, from South Africa, from Mexico, and from the Hilton Riverside Hotel.

(Laughter)

So, we'll ease into this as people keep coming in, and I hope that we will have a good afternoon.

Welcome to the 2006 ALA President's Program. I am Michael Gorman, ALA President for the next three days, and I'm delighted that so many of you have found the time in your busy conference schedules to join me and Kevin Starr, my distinguished guest this afternoon, for a discussion of "Reading: The Essential Skill."

I'll introduce our keynote speaker in just a few moments, but first I'd like to share some thoughts about why I think that reading is an essential skill in today's electronic age, and why I chose it as the focus of my President's Program.

I've been thinking a lot about reading and books and texts and literacy in the last few years. It seems to me that one of the errors we make is in regarding literacy as some kind of hurdle that you have to leap over. On one side you're illiterate and you jump over and then you're literate.

Literacy is really a continuous process of being able to interact with more and more complex texts as you go through life. Without that ability to interact with complex texts... [and by the way, Patricia Graves, our captionist, is a wonder. This is such a difficult job.

(Applause)

It has relieved the tedium of many ALA Council meetings to see the odd, slightly strange spellings, but it's a wonderful job she does.]

People are powerless unless they have the ability to interact with complex texts, and to do the other side of that coin, to express themselves in a compelling and clear way.

This is not just a matter of technology, because a text is a text. An illiterate in front of a computer is no better off than an illiterate with a book in her hands. In other words, you can take that text and make something of it, and improve your life, and be able to have some control over your life, or you cannot.

Absent literacy, there is a real danger that this society will become the first in human history to have a materially prosperous underclass -- in other words, people who have the material things they need in life, but don't have an inner life. Because of the lack of literacy, they cannot express themselves in order to empower themselves and thus they are potential victims of anyone who can exploit them, for financial reasons or political reasons, and so on. If you can't read policy statements, how can you deal with the political arena? And then we wonder why people vote because somebody's got a fuller head of hair than the competitor. In other words, in order to engage with life, you need to be fully literate. And that's the first reason why literacy is important.

Another reason why literacy is important is because you can never become a fully realized human being without the interior life that literacy can give you.

One of the reasons why I'm the chairman of the "Canonize JK Rowling Movement" is that she has single-handedly brought the joys of reading to a whole generation of children. There are millions and millions of children (and in this context we should also be very glad that millions of those are male children) who are engaging with complex texts, with long words in them, and finding a wholly liberating experience of the mind.

(Applause)

And I want to say just one last thing. When my wife and I were in Italy within the last year, we went to a Catholic church and there were some children who were going to be confirmed. Part of the ceremony was that they came up and kissed a very elaborately bound, gold-bound version of the Bible. But I suddenly thought, "What are they kissing? Is it this book, this physical object, or is it the text of which it is a manifestation?"

We call religious people "people of the book." The word "Koran," the word "Bible," and the word "Talmud" are all derived from things connected with reading. But really they are not "people of the book," they are "people of the text." It's the text that is important. The importance of books is that that is the one way we know to make those texts manifest to people and to preserve those texts. That is the importance of books. The real importance is the texts that they contain. "And in the beginning was the Word," as the Bible opens, and really, in all of our lives, the word, those texts, is the most important thing that we have for our interior lives.

I'd like to say just a few words about logistics of this program. At the conclusion of the keynote address by Kevin Starr we will have a question-and-answer session. If you have a question or a comment, please write it on an index card and indicate if it is to be directed to me, to Kevin Starr, or to either one of these elderly gentlemen seated up here.

Additional index cards are being distributed now. If you'd like a card, please raise your hand.

This program is being captioned for the hearing-impaired. The captioned text will be posted on my Web site in July. It takes a while to prepare the presentation for posting, so if you do not find the text when you first go to the Web site, please check again at a later date. The URL for my Web site is www.mg.csufresno.edu .

It is now my enormous pleasure to introduce Kevin Starr to you. In fact, I can almost completely encapsulate this introduction in a story about being in a cab with Kevin last night coming back from dinner. Kevin was talking, as is his wont -- he is a polymath, an historian, a librarian, a man of great education and culture. And talking on a variety of topics, we were having this wonderful conversation. Just before we got back to the hotel the cab driver said, "I don't want to play Scrabble with THIS guy!"

(Laughter)

Kevin Starr, University Professor and professor of history at the University of Southern California and California State Librarian Emeritus, was born in San Francisco in 1940. After graduating from the University of San Francisco in 1962, he served for two years as a lieutenant in a tank battalion in Germany. Upon release from the service, he entered Harvard University, where he took his MA degree in 1965 and his Ph.D.

in American literature in 1969. He also holds the Master of Library Science degree from U.C. Berkeley and has done post-doctoral work at the Graduate Theological Union.

By the way, there are only two librarians that I know of in the 20th century who were appointed to important library positions without a library degree and went on to get a library degree subsequently. One is Kevin Starr. The other is, for the older people in the audience, Dr. SR Ranganathan. So we are dealing with an eminent librarian indeed!

Kevin served as Allston Burr Senior Tutor in Eliot House at Harvard, executive assistant to the Mayor of San Francisco, as City Librarian of San Francisco, as a daily columnist for the San Francisco *Examiner* and is a contributing editor to the *Opinion* section of the Los Angeles *Times*. He is the author of numerous newspaper and magazine articles and has written or edited 14 books, six of which are part of his *Americans and the California Dream* series. His writing has won him a Guggenheim Fellowship, membership in the Society of American Historians, and the Gold Medal of the Commonwealth Club of California. His most recent book is *California, a History* published in 2005 by Random House.

Dr. Starr has recently been nominated to be on the board of IMLS, the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

Please join me in welcoming Kevin Starr.

(Applause)

>> KEVIN STARR: Thank you, Michael. What an honor to be here and to be introduced by one of my heroes in the field of librarianship, a person to whom, as State Librarian for ten years, I turned to many times. And obviously his position as President of this great association suggests that he has the respect as well of the field throughout this nation.

I see in the audience my successor as State Librarian, Susan Hildreth of the California State Library. What a pleasure to see you, Susan.

(Applause)

Now, in approaching the issue of print, print media, text and reading and the digital age, it is important for us librarians -- and Michael suggested how I came precipitously into my profession and my library degree, and now I've become a great conservative saying that we have to keep the library degree intact, et cetera. I learned that lesson from the librarian's guild at the San Francisco Public Library. But it's important to remind ourselves of what the great critic Samuel Johnson once said of intellectual analysis in general. "It is not necessary to be original," Johnson tells us, "but it is necessary to be correct."

Therefore, let me say something very simple, very unoriginal. We librarians were terribly bullied, sometimes by members of our own profession, at the dawn of the digital age. We were told by cultural critics, those not willing to vote for library budgets, by gurus of technology and, alas, by some librarians that the age of Gutenberg was over and the age of Silicon Valley had begun, and now we each would detach ourselves from print and float like great cyber jellyfish in a current of a cyber sea.

Society would become paperless. They would merge libraries without books and in time whatever was valuable from the age of Gutenberg would be transferred to digital format and our libraries would become relics of an earlier age, to be visited now and then like the pilgrim from New Zealand who visits the ruin in London in Macaulay's famous passage from his *History*.

Let's fast forward into the present and see how these predictions turned out. Texts, the printed word, intricate printed language is everywhere. The Internet is a galaxy of text, text without end, demanding the skills and act of reading, by electronic equipment that requires assembly. And consider the accompanying text. It requires a Ph.D. in electronics to decipher, unless you're under 30.

Read the printed description that accompanies pharmaceuticals, setting forth a language, the capacities and side effects, the dos and the don'ts of the medication involved, and you might as well have a pharmacy degree.

Am I imagining things or has the language level of magazines such as *Vanity Fair* or the *Rolling Stone* reached the intricacies of the *New Yorker*? Yes, *Rolling Stone*, a magazine about rock music: pages abounding in compound sentences, conditional phrases, participles that don't dangle, restrictive and nonrestrictive clauses, colons, semicolons, subjunctives -- all this to explicate a genre of music whose lyrics exist as Dionysian grunts. Newspapers might be embattled as an industry, but we are in the golden age of newspapers, textured local writing. The *Wall Street Journal* and the *New York Times*, the two leading mass circulation newspapers, are daily feasts, in my opinion, of advanced writing, hence advanced reading. I personally am impressed by the writing and editing of *USA Today*, which I read, along with millions of others, when traveling.

Children's and young adult fiction, meanwhile, has never been more intricate or better written, much less more courageously involved with current themes. The adult novel as represented by those winning the Pulitzer or Booker Prizes has emerged from the haze to return to the world of events,

inner experience and social complexity as displayed by disciplined writing.

And not to mention the golden age of nonfiction we are currently enjoying: histories, biographies, and memoirs on our bestseller lists. The golden age of American historical writing. We are witnesses inside the academy and from such writers as the late, great Barbara Tuchman and still-active David McCullough.

I could go on, but I hear you and you stopped me. Even from the distance of the podium I can hear the roar of your objections. "Yes, well and good," you are saying, "but what about the millions and millions of illiterate or semi-literate fellows in our midst? What about the millions of others who can read, but prefer not to, unless they must?" True, all too true. But first let us establish a point, a matrix, and from there go forward to address certain challenges.

The digital age has had the effect of intensifying the printed word, the published text, putting aside for the moment the question of how many are availing themselves of such texts. The more digital we have become, the more sheer data that has been transferred to the digital format, the more the printed word in a wide variety of modes and formats has expanded and intensified.

Or, to draw upon John Naisbitt, the more high tech we have become, the more re-explored the high touch range of the written and printed word.

By its very nature, in fact, digital technology has made a trans-technological, almost a trans-species leap over to the printed text, to explain itself. If we can grant this proposition, and I at least have accepted it, then we can move into the problem and the challenges and perhaps glimpse

something of the road ahead. However rich and resourceful the printed word might currently be, ours is a partially and troublingly illiterate or semi-literate age, a condition that functions as a primary source of pain to us librarians.

Yet it is also, and herein lies the hope, an age of robust orality as well. The spoken word is alive. The talk show format flourishes on television. Talk radio is a national force. Discussion-based punditry, once confined to Sunday morning, dominates the evening news format as print-based commentators, many of them having established their credentials first as writers, earn their daily bread and then going on. Such pundits get on television because they have written and published, but they survive because their language is inexhaustible. Others bypass the writing stage and just start talking.

The town meeting format, reminiscent of the famous WW II *Saturday Evening Post* cover "Freedom of Speech" by Norman Rockwell, established itself as a staple of national political life, especially when televised. The Book Channel links the printed word to the spoken commentary, offering writers the opportunity to authenticate and sell their books by talking about them. We have run out of reclusive writers. In fact, the JD Salingers, and Harper Lees demanded that our writers become skilled oral promoters of their product.

The cell phone, in fact, has enabled millions to become the stars of their own talk show programs.

(Laughter)

Broadcasting to reluctant audiences on elevators, airport waiting lines, airplanes themselves just before takeoff and as soon as the plane hits the tarmac, broadcasting sagas of business deals, love fests, travel connections, whatever,

making millions the central protagonists. Even here, however, I can hear the murmur, this time not the roar, of your objections.

What about the silence? The anti-orality of the digital age? The silence of those surfing the Web? The isolated silence of video games? The elliptical language of teenage-to-adult discourse? Or better, no discourse. What can seem like the near disappearance of dialog from our motion pictures?

All this is also true. And now we have a number of forces in play. On the positive side, a renewed appreciation -- indeed, dependence -- upon the printed text and a renewed sense of the power of language as speech, as the spoken word.

On the negative side, an epidemic of illiteracy and semi-literacy, a declining taste for reading via the total population, and a resurgence of nonverbal communication. At best, outright noncommunication in the darker side.

What a challenging time, then, for us librarians. On the positive side, we must help bring to our communities a golden age of writing as printed text at a time when hundreds of new titles are appearing each day.

Now, more than ever, we must remain ourselves navigators of the printed word and we must do this with a full and equal appreciation of digital storage and retrieval as far as sheer information is concerned.

This is to say that we must remain skilled in the core discipline of our profession, which was, is, and remains bibliography. Which is to say the knowledge of books and their contents, their settings and relationships to other books in the same or other fields and the relative value of each and every title. That, incidentally, is why the discarding of books is so painful -- because each and every title or almost

each and every title has a specific genesis and value, a past and, perhaps, a future readership. If only a readership of one, it must be respected. Which, among other things, is why we should avoid at all costs moving a collection into smaller quarters, and winnowing it simultaneously, lest the move under pressure become a route of discard, placing embarrassingly respectable titles in the democracy dumpster.

As bibliographers, we are navigators of value in partnership with Google and other search engines, but it's an unequal partnership, for we bring the added dimension of value and evaluation of value, practical value, personalized value, community oriented value, to our task. We librarians do not merely store and retrieve books, we keep them in living connection to our communities and, book-to-book, in living connection to each other.

As professionals, moreover, we must have faith in our core competency, especially now that the printed word is thriving in equal partnership to digital technology. We must remember that our profession is as much about wisdom and value, not just our own wisdom and value, but the wisdom and value of others, however different that wisdom and value might be, as it is about information and retrieval.

This means, of course, that we must link bibliography as classically practiced to digital technology as completely as we can, for they have become so interactive as to have become part of the same process.

The better the information technology of a library, I've often found, from this perspective, the better the book selection tends to be. And how gleeful I must confess have I been as State Librarian when the IT systems of those few and bravely assertive bookless libraries in California crashed.

(Laughter)

It became as if the empty shelves were mocking the failed electronics. The high tech, then, of the digital age has conferred even more high tech -- high touchability on bibliography as a core discipline of librarianship. Yet, just as we embrace the digital, in part because it has reaffirmed the enduring use of the printed word, so too we must not shun the orality of our culture, its return to the spoken word.

Children's librarians have, from the 19th century, insisted that story hour be fixed at the center of any successful children's program. Reading aloud from a text compounds the power of each medium and encourages children to develop worlds within. Study after study has shown the value of reading aloud to the mental, imaginative and psychological development of children and to their physical health.

As State Librarian for California, I was delighted to authorize an LSTA grant to the library of the pediatric ward of the Stanford University Medical School Hospital, to set up a program of prescribing, by doctors on an actual Rx form, the prescribing of books, title by title, to be either read to or by children seriously challenged in their health as part of their ongoing recovery program.

I will always personally remember my housemother, Sister Maritzia from St. Albert's school in Ukiah, California, reading to us boys each night in the dorm before the lights were turned out, books such as *Robinson Crusoe* and *Swiss Family Robinson*, stories from the Bible, listening sessions to which nearly 60 years later I grant equal accord to the Jesuits and Harvard as far as my education and love of reading are concerned.

Orality can be the friend, not the enemy, of print culture. Hundreds of thousands of years before we learned to write,

much less to print, we learned to speak. Indeed, that capacity for speech has to have been the defining moment in our development, although I have no qualifications to say this, not being an anthropologist.

I do know, however, that the ancient Hebrews, from whom we derive so much of our culture, considered each spoken word as a living entity, possessed of its own being, once uttered, always existing.

And the ancient Greeks, Plato especially, from whom we also derived so much of our culture, believed that the word, the *logos*, was not merely a sign of something, it was the very means by which the material world was actualized and kept in existence through idea.

Language for the ancients, then, the spoken word, was the very tissue of reality itself. More, it was the means by which through *nous*, through mind, that the reality came into full being. Even today, the predominant notion of our psycholinguistics is that we cannot have a thought unless we are using language as our primary tool for analysis. In philosophy, linguistic analysts still probe that long-ago moment when language made the mysterious connection to the external world, if only as a matter of standardized convention, and thereby saved the human from a generalized autism of being locked within ourselves before an uncertain and shifting universe, whose meaning, if there were one, we had no tools to decipher.

American figures as diverse as William James and Robert Frost stated that we don't know what we think or what we want our poems to say until we enter language. And, imitating the thinking or poeticizing pro, I wrote a lot across a busy life, some of it good, some of it okay, some of it best forgotten.

But in each instance, language heard, spoken to myself within, has been my actualizer and friend. I've never had writer's cramp, although in a few cases it would have perhaps been better if I had.

If I could hear it, I could write it. If I could hear it within myself, I would write it. And that is how I advise students and would-be writers getting their start. "The spoken word," I tell them, "is, as the ancient Hebrews and Greeks suggested, a living resource, integrated into the fabric of creation itself via our minds, which minds themselves brought further into being by language as well as by experience. And this experience, of course, is understood through words."

The circularity, moreover, is connected in a unique way through the written word. Writing authenticates speech and printing authenticates writing. Hence, the printed text is like the printed notes of a published score, of a cantata by Johann Sebastian Bach, a means of signing, storing, and then releasing the music, pervasive and majestic as creation itself.

Speaking, thinking, writing, printing, reading have become in us human beings an integrated and natural act. And if they are temporarily out of sync these days, we librarians have our work cut out for us. We become masters of speech and information councilors. We hear talking and singing, even hip-hop, although I'll leave that task to my younger colleagues, and we suggest to our patrons, when appropriate, the power of speech, especially poetry, when reading out loud from the printed text.

And as far as the silence from the digital age is concerned, we turn that silence to our advantage as we promote the maturing interaction, the nurturing interaction between silence and reading. We librarians have long been satirized as

the "Shhhh" figures, compelling silence in the library, but of late we have accommodated ourselves better to noise, especially where teenagers are concerned.

Yet the silence of reading is not fully to be abandoned, or at the least it's still to be respected, even if less aggressively enforced. When speech made the transition to transcription and transcription made it into print, this transition to manuscripts, speech retained the spoken force. For the Greeks, a manuscript was a place of temporary storage for words awaiting release through speech.

In the early part of the last century, scholar Alfred Lord, through a comparative study of the Balkan bards, suggested how the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* existed as folklore traditions, spoken traditions, through memory, long before they were transcribed. So did the Anglo-Saxon poem *Beowulf*, and so did St. Patrick. He was able to engage in dialog with the Irish because he had apprenticed himself to and had mastered the Lore, the spoken word of the Druids. Indian culture prizes scholars capable of reciting from memory thousands of lines from the Vedic epics. We encounter Shakespeare as lines to be spoken, but we remember their power by passing into print, whether or not under Shakespeare's supervision and across four centuries of scholarship being regularized by generations of textual critics.

The more we printed the spoken word and the more the book came into importance, the more silent we became when we read, just as so many of us are today falling silent before our computers.

That silence, however, the silence before the computer, remains ambiguous in its meaning. Are we becoming before the computer more or less of ourselves as we gaze into the screen?

The silence of the book, by contrast, has emerged more clearly into view some 500 years since we began to grow silent as we read. First of all, the paradox as cited by CS Lewis in the play, and later the film, *Shadowlands* is that we read to know that we are not alone, that we belong to something grand and vast and terrible and compelling, and that others have engaged one or another aspect of this mystery on our behalf and welcome us to share through print their encounter and the fruits of their engagement.

The more alone we are in reading, CS Lewis tells us, the more we belong. And yet through reading as well, reading aloud, true, but silent reading in the main, the more we read, the more we assuage our loneliness in the company of others, the more we become ourselves, the more we discover and actualize our autonomy.

That is what makes illiteracy such a compound tragedy. Those deprived of literacy are not only being deprived of the pragmatic tools of daily life, they are being stunted in the full possibilities of their development.

As State Librarian for California, I loved attending the graduation ceremonies of the literacy programs that the library operated. They were so joyous and hopeful. Time after time I heard graduates remark, either in speeches or private remarks, how, by acquiring literacy, they had acquired not only tools for their economic survival, but also an increased capacity to grow inwardly, to discover and create new landscapes within, to become that person they could never fully become before, when they were ensnared in ill- or simply literacy.

As State Librarian for California, I was delighted to authorize, at the suggestion of staff, the establishment of our literacy program as a bureau or program equal to any other we

were offering. Literacy, its promotion and transference, had long since become a core competency of librarianship, just as service to the blind and visually handicapped had become a fixed component of our service profile.

As I said at the beginning of these remarks, I am here to say a few basic things. Basic things have a way of being powerful and mysterious, don't they? We librarians are in and around reading in our professional lives, just as physicians are in and around medicine and healing and lawyers are in and around law and architects and engineers are in and around the building environment and clergy are in and around sacred things.

Being in and around reading in such a daily professional way should not blind us to what our American Library Association President, Michael Gorman, has asked us to consider this afternoon here in New Orleans, that is, "Reading: The Essential Skill.

Reading is essential because the digital age has required us to read more closely and intricately than ever before. Reading is essential because our society is still explaining and mapping itself through printed texts. Reading is essential because the sheer orality of our culture, the talkativeness of our entertainment, requires discipline and nuance effective in discourse. Essential, because reading has long since become a means of self-definition, autonomy and enrichment in our culture, however we may have temporarily forgotten that truth. Essential, because without reading we lose connection, paradoxically, with the best possibilities of the digital and oral age.

A long time ago, Lewis Mumford tells us, we human beings began to write down our words, empowered by the long, long

development of vocabulary, grammar, and of course alphabet. Writing things down for later reading, we not only conquered time, we expanded our connection to creation itself. Through grammar and the alphabet we achieved a monumental reordering of human life and that in turn, Mumford argues, led us to create cities, hence civilization as a form of living language, as a spatialization and materialization of human need, born of human biology, food, water, shelter, safety, along with higher needs as well, community, identity, transcendence. Hence language led to writing, and writing led to cities as a kind of text, a kind of living archive, a library of human needs and higher aspiration.

That all happened such a short time ago, a mere 5,000 or 6,000 years ago at the most. Coming together into cities, Aristotle would later tell us, we became more human. And that expansion of our humanity, if Mumford is correct, was made possible in great part by the fact that we learned to read and to write.

We literally wrote and read ourselves into the city, and by so doing we created a new plane for human experience. Over the eras, great cities have risen across the globe, some fell, remarkably few in comparison to the total number, remarkably few have fallen. A much larger impressive number of cities have survived. It's very interesting to see the revival of the medieval city from Toledo to Moscow, to see all the names, and every one of those states is still flourishing.

One of the cities that survived, that was founded and survived, some five or six thousand years later, was New Orleans. Like all successful cities, New Orleans encoded in itself and expressed something distinct regarding the human experience. New Orleans is a text, something to be read, to be

construed, a spatialization of language, the language of the built environment, the language of human culture. In the case of New Orleans, the power of the Mississippi River as it came to the sea, bringing with it the trade, commerce and travel of a vast continent. New Orleans also testifies, sometimes negatively, sometimes positively, to the challenge of diversity, racial and cultural diversity, in our nation. In the celebratory side of its personality, New Orleans testifies to the joy of life, as it mingled the peoples, cuisines and customs of four continents into its own distinctive style. We could read New Orleans as a text. For better or for worse, New Orleans told us something about being an American.

Katrina interrupted that text, that reading, even more forcefully than the digital age invaded the world of print. Yet New Orleans will recover and reintegrate itself. That is our American hope. That is the hope of the American Library Association, as the American Library Association brings this great gathering to this city. Future historians, historians of the recovery of New Orleans, will cite the coming here of this gathering of the American Library Association as a turning point.

Librarians, you see, are good readers. They can read the signs of the times; they can read the cities of the times. The signs indicate that a great city can rise from its near destruction. These signs indicate as well that reading, however challenged, however embattled, can, like the city, take the urban form it helped to create in ancient times. Reading can prove equally resilient. I predict a renewed New Orleans. And as a librarian, I predict and I can look forward to helping, being with you all to work towards the revitalization of that fundamental skill, that actualizer of our culture and

humanity: reading.

As Michael Gorman reminds us, reading is essential. And equally essential is our beloved profession of librarianship.

Thank you.

(Applause)

>> PRES. MICHAEL GORMAN: Thank you very much, Kevin, for that wonderful and inspiring speech. What we will do now is take your questions and have a conversation around those questions. Please, send some comments, some questions for either of us, things to talk about, and we will take it from there.

I believe they are going to activate these middle mikes now, so we can converse from these chairs in a setting eerily reminiscent of a television studio. It occurred to me that one of the things that Kevin was referring to, this orality of culture, still needs words, even on screens, to explain it. The Jerry Springer Show, for example, is almost incomprehensible until you read that it's about one-legged men who leave their wives for dachshunds. And it's that strap line that gives it its power. The words express the whole thing in this dramatic way, otherwise it's just a bunch of idiots yelling at each other.

I'm thinking of the CNN Headline News, sports scores along the bottom and something else at the top, just words everywhere and the incessant babble going on. But people are trying to read the words to try to figure out what the truth is.

Here is a question. I think we will kick this off for Kevin: "Please comment on the impact of media sound bites on public discourse and involvement. For example, given the topic of global warming."

>> KEVIN STARR: Well, I'm frequently interviewed on television, at least in California, on various topics, and you really become aware of how quickly you have to say things, how telegraphically you have to say things.

On the one hand, there is the obvious abuse of it, that it takes more words and more subtlety or more nuances to suggest something. On the other hand, we have to have the world in part the way it is. The telegram is a brief format. This format is with us and it's not going to go away. It's important for us to master it as much as possible, as opposed to just staying resentful of it.

Journalism, American journalism, has learned to front-load in its first paragraph what the story is going to be about. That becomes a branding of the story, in effect, a prediction of the story. There is something in the oral nature of our culture that asks for these sound bites. It asks that we quickly get to the point and then later come back to it. The problem is that many times we don't come later back to it.

>> PRES. MICHAEL GORMAN: The question of the sound bites is that everything is reduced to a phrase, a piece of jargon. You know, if you present a nuanced approach to whether we should have troops in a particular country or either "staying the course" or "cutting and running," well, neither of those phrases really mean anything very much, or they are certainly not a substitute for a genuine discussion about what people can do. I suppose that the encapsulating of things in little phrases that is characteristic of political campaigns is having a deleterious effect, because people at the same time are writing long articles on public policy issues, and the capability to absorb those long complex articles is diminished

if you live in that world of sound bites.

>> KEVIN STARR: I agree with what you say in terms of the content. On the other hand, the sound bite, like the headline which emerged in the late 19th century newspaper, demands that we look at language in a very condensed way. We respect the verb, we get the right kind of nouns. If you're going to do the sound bite, it's not just banal or superficial, it might mean summoning of language and frontloading the possible suggestion of a larger complexity.

>> PRES. MICHAEL GORMAN: It's true. FDR took the most complex issues in his world and reduced it to seven letters, the New Deal. The New Deal was a very, very powerful image. Even if you weren't given to sitting around discussing the details of which alphabet soup agency was going to do what, you knew that there was a New Deal around. It was a square deal and had all the other connotations.

>> KEVIN STARR: President Kennedy also, saying "I'm also a Berliner," or "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country" or any of the other memorable lines that we can remember.

>> PRES. MICHAEL GORMAN: Actually, somebody told me, I don't speak German, I learned a bit in school and I forgot it all, "Ich bin ein Berliner" means "I'm a jelly doughnut," doesn't it?

>> KEVIN STARR: That's why I got such a good response.

>> PRES. MICHAEL GORMAN: Here is one particularly for Dr. Starr: "Are blogs hurting or helping the language?"

>> KEVIN STARR: I think it's helping the language. It's challenging the language. It's making the language be vivid, be rapid, get to the point.

The one area where I think we are having problems is vocabulary. I think we're giving up a lot of words. Just think, when the world was changing for Shakespeare, the language took in some 50,000 words. If it's true that you can't have a thought unless you have a word for it, that's 50,000 variations of thoughts. So as we surrender words today, especially now that Bill Buckley is nearing his retirement period, as we surrender a valid word that we earned over time from language, we surrender a subtlety of thought. I'm worried about that. I'm worried about the condensation of vocabulary, not to use fancy words for their own sakes, sometimes just a monosyllabic Anglo-Saxon is the best word to use. When we were in school a thousand years ago, vocabulary drill was an important part of how we were educated.

>> PRES. MICHAEL GORMAN: I am so well known as a proponent of blogging that further comment is superfluous.

This next was addressed to me and I had to read it twice, because I wasn't familiar with the term, but I think I get what is going on and Kevin just touched on it: "Do you believe in the language experience approach to literacy?" If I can say it, I can write it. If I can write it, I can read it. And if I can read it, so can others. That is apparently the language experience approach. Those seem to me to be very valid ideas.

>> KEVIN STARR: It's revolutionized the teaching of Latin. Now it's taught in the fifth and sixth grades. Once you learn Latin, you can learn any other language. You absorb a habit of grammar that is fundamental. Latin is taught to graduate students using these techniques in six weeks, whereas previously we memorized the declensions and didn't make a breakthrough in language until we were three or four years into it.

I think that the idea of learning languages, where you don't substitute another word, you don't say "Here is the Spanish word for such and such," but you have the Spanish word and then you see the flower, or you see the piece of paper through the Spanish, that's a wonderful breakthrough in language training.

>> PRES. MICHAEL GORMAN: I'm in favor of anything that works. It seems to me that we need to take literacy very, very seriously. It's not just one among a whole mass of different skills that you can pick and choose from. Without true literacy you can never be truly educated. You can never be truly empowered. You can never be a truly independent acting human being. Anything that works is fine with me.

I'd like to address this next question, but I'm sure Kevin will have something to say about it: "What can we as librarians do to stimulate serious reading among college students and 20-somethings?"

I think one of the biggest problems with higher education has been the flight from reading in the last --

(Applause)

-- in the last 25 years. It seems to me that at an institution like Fresno State, where I work, we have a large number of part-time students, a large number of people who are nontraditional students, people with lives and families and jobs and things like that, that if anything we penalize people for reading. We say, "Fine, you can go read what you want, but you're not going to get extra credit for it. We will just test you on the narrowest readings, and we know you haven't got much time and you're not going to get rewarded for going outside that."

I know it's slightly controversial, because the image of the great books brings up the "dead white males" issue. Personally, I think a great book is a great book or a great text, whether it's written by a live white male or a dead Asian female. The gender and the ethnicity of the author are completely irrelevant -- after all, we don't know who Shakespeare was. We know something about him but we don't know anything about him as a person. His gender and sexual orientation and ethnicity are the most irrelevant things about him.

You can have a Great Books curriculum that includes lots of people who aren't dead white males. You can take it from various cultures. You can mix and match and so on. But the great thing to me is encouraging and rewarding reading. We need more courses, particularly at the graduate level, but in some cases it's almost too late at that stage, where the course is based on reading books and commenting on them and discussing them and writing essays on them.

This is not an airy-fairy faddish idea. If we talk to employers in the Fresno area, which has a very high rate of unemployment, 14 percent or something -- you know, in Fresno County a lot of our students are first generation students of parents who never even got out of high school -- if you talk to the employers they will say, "The biggest failing is they come to us with your degree, and within the first couple of weeks I handed this young man, this young woman or middle-aged man or women, a report, and said I'd like to you do a two-page summary and give it to me by next Wednesday," and they find they can't do it. They simply haven't got the skill to read a report, even in a subject with which they are familiar, and distill its essence and express it clearly in writing.

So, putting reading at the heart of the educational experience, I think, would revolutionize American higher education and also, as an incidental bonus, produce people who are much more capable of functioning well in the workplace.

(Applause)

>> KEVIN STARR: Well, it's very interesting. In college teaching, I talk to a lot of college professors in my new line of work, or recovered line of work. In the 1950s and '60s, a literature course might have had 10 or 11 novels on the reading list where today, very commonly, and this is at universities like Stanford University, universities with high standards for admission, five or six books would be considered a large number of books to read. This criticism of Stanford came to me from Richard White, a distinguished American historian, who is a radical kind of guy. He is not exactly an old stuffed shirt. He can't believe how hard it is to get students to read beyond a certain level. Whether that's due to a competing medium or just this kind of loss of attention span, I don't know. It's certainly a problem.

>> PRES. MICHAEL GORMAN: I think any student who has read the Harry Potter books is capable of reading long books. They have to want to do it and they have to be rewarded for it. There has to be something more in it for them so they can fit it into their lives and they will get credit for it, get credit for reading outside the set materials, and so on.

Of course, one of the great problems with online education is that almost by definition people who are doing online education solely don't have access to good library collections. Their ability to read beyond the set books, the electronic documents that they receive on reserves and so on, is very limited.

>> PRES. MICHAEL GORMAN: "Dr. Starr, you spent much of your work living in a political milieu. What hope is there that this world would rise above political decision-making in a literal context? Is there a perspective from the written history?"

>> KEVIN STARR: Well, I don't exactly know whether I want to live in a world that rises beyond political decisions. I think to have established a society in which political decisions can be made in an open, forthright manner is quite an achievement. I think what I with like to do is have more literate politicians --

(Applause)

-- and I note with great pleasure the appearance of a number of professional librarians down at the California State Assembly who have run for office and a larger number of library commissioners who move on into higher office. I like politics myself, otherwise you wouldn't be State Librarian. I love the chutzpah and capacity for self-dramatization of our elected officials. I have a strong ego, but I admire their egos. It's wonderful. It takes a certain kind of person to be in politics, to put all your private life on paper and reported in the media and have everybody look at it. I admire them and hope we get even better, more learned people in the political process.

There is nothing wrong with politics. It is, as Aristotle defines it, the art of the possibility. Don't forget that he put it as part of epics, it should be about what is the best thing to do.

>> PRES. MICHAEL GORMAN: The most literate politician in recent history was Eugene McCarthy.

>> KEVIN STARR: Moynahan.

>> PRES. MICHAEL GORMAN: McCarthy ran for President several times, unsuccessfully in '68, but again in '72 and '76. When he was on the campaign trail in '76, he gave a talk -- let's say in Keokuk, someplace where there were not many people, perhaps six people in the audience. It was pouring rain, nobody listened to his message. Eugene McCarthy left feeling troubled, unhappy. He was going back to his hotel through the rain, because he had no money and there were no limos. A man caught up with him and said, "Senator McCarthy, I was just listening to you. I was one of the small audience. What a wonderful speech! There is something that baffles me about you, though. You don't seem to be as tough on communism as you used to be."

(Laughter)

>> KEVIN STARR: You know, when you think of literate politicians, if he had never been President, the author of *The Winning of the West*, the author of *The Naval War of 1812*, Teddy Roosevelt would have survived as a respected writer. And it's amazing as well, the British tradition of politicians. Look at Churchill's volumes on Marlborough, *The River War*, all his earlier reportage, *History of the English-Speaking Peoples*, a remarkable writing, a remarkable consumption of nurturing beverages.

>> PRES. MICHAEL GORMAN: He was once heckled by a woman in the audience who shouted out, "Churchill, you are drunk," and he said, "Yes, I am drunk, and you're not very attractive. But I'll be sober in the morning."

(Laughter)

>> PRES. MICHAEL GORMAN: "What do you make of the epidemic of written fraud in our texts? So many journalists and writers" -- not to mention students, it doesn't say that here,

but -- "journalists and writers are prone to plagiarize and to invent material."

>> KEVIN STARR: That's interesting. I think it relates to the oral nature of our culture. If you look at, say, the Middle Ages, when the oral culture was at its height, Chaucer takes wholesale from other writers, without attribution, and Shakespeare of course is taking things, et cetera. If you live in an oral world there tends to be one great big text that is communally owned. With the rise of books and printing, with the predominance and values of the print age, we exerted an ownership of ideas and intellectual property that runs counter to the others. Students download things from the Net and turn it in and not think that they are plagiarizing, but that it's a common resource. It's like allowing water to flow into your garden from a nearby aqueduct. So that's why intellectual property is a growing area of law, and I think we'll have more and more of these things as we do.

There is another side, and I know this from having written 14 books and history books. You take a historian like Steven Ambrose who wrote over 10,000 printed pages in his career. Corrupted material appeared on something like 10 pages. He had five research assistants and corrupt text or corrupted notes came downstream to him. I think it's a real challenge now for those of us who work in nonfiction, et cetera, to constantly maintain a sense of what our sources are, what language, what phraseology we can use, et cetera, because in conversation we don't have to do that. We can, in conversation, join the great big unfolding conversational text of our society.

>> PRES. MICHAEL GORMAN: But I think with Ambrose and Doris Goodwin, there is a genuine error because they work with assistants and recognize these words as being somebody else's,

and so on. This is different from fraud. Disregard for other people's intellectual property, just taking it and knowingly passing it off as your own, happens in universities up and down this country every day and I think that there is a real danger in it.

I always remember the story about Charles Dickens. We were talking last night about people like Trollope. He got up and wrote his thousand words and went to work. Dickens loved to write. When he came to America, his first visit to America, they were ripping off his books, publishing him without paying him, and he said, "I'm going to stop writing." This was a man who couldn't stop writing, but he said, "I'm going to stop unless you give me what is owed to me, both the credit for what I do and recompense for what I do."

I think that this disrespect for other people's creative output is a dangerous thing. I mean, you know, from the sublime to the ridiculous, go to the Napster thing, where people stole other people's output without paying for it, and somehow thinking this was okay.

>> KEVIN STARR: An intense orality involves a constant temptation to retribalize information, to make it belong to the tribe rather than an individual.

>> PRES. MICHAEL GORMAN: It's a regression to childhood. One of the things that is characteristic of children is they don't recognize other people's property. It's just out there, it's part of the world, I want it.

>> PRES. MICHAEL GORMAN: Now, here is one that is straight down your alley. I feel that you are supremely qualified to answer this.

"Do you feel that the backlash to hip-hop denies the very dynamic nature and continuing evolution of language and grammar? Who decides which words are accepted?"

>> KEVIN STARR: Well, certainly in terms of, say, some of the more outer edge hip-hop songs that involve misogyny, et cetera, I have no trouble saying that that is not anything that I'm interested in. But there is a truth there that language has to exist on the edge, has to be active on the edge.

Now, let me change the argument for just a half a second. Since I can't really fully answer the question, I'll try to dodge it a bit.

(Laughter)

Everybody says to me, "*Deadwood* -- it's wonderful. It's on HBO. It's wonderful." And I say that's fine, but people in the West in the 19th century didn't swear that way. They didn't swear that way. And we know that. We have enough transcriptions, we have enough historical material. People swore, but when they swore they were really serious about it. They didn't exist in profanity. That is a modern obsession imposed on the West and I resent it. It's anti-historical.

But while we have that interest -- not even just in swearing, but in obscenities and crudities of all sorts -- it was opposite. Most people in the West were concerned about being refined, were concerned about behaving themselves, et cetera. It's a different culture altogether.

How do I tie that with the hip-hop? You can't be against it. I feel, to repeat myself, that certain aspects of it are just not to be encouraged. But I tuned out with the Beach Boys.

(Laughter)

>> PRES. MICHAEL GORMAN: In fact, one of the things I didn't mention in the introduction is that Kevin Starr was part of the original lineup of the Beach Boys.

(Laughter)

I was thinking of the answer to who decides which words are accepted. It would be simple if we were in France. There it's the Académie française. They decide what is correct in the French language and everything else is outlawed. But we take a much more descriptive approach to language rather than that prescriptive.

But there is one word of caution I would say, and again to get back to work/life, young people, even today, are concerned about getting jobs. One sure way of not getting a job is sending in completely ungrammatical, incoherent letters of application. It's rare when you're interviewing for a job to interview everybody who sends you a letter of application. That letter of application is your key in the door. I know countless employers who wouldn't look at anybody if the letter is badly expressed, ungrammatical, incoherent. They don't want somebody like that working for them.

So there is a danger in saying yes, this is creative. We have been through all these years of saying to kids that spelling and grammar don't matter, it's just your creativity, and all that kind of thing. They do matter if you want to get on in the world.

>> KEVIN STARR: When e-mail first came out, they thought they could spell ungrammatically, et cetera. And now e-mail requires from responsible adults an etiquette that is in effect 95 percent that of the written letter.

>> PRES. MICHAEL GORMAN: Exactly. Right.

>> PRES. MICHAEL GORMAN: "What would Dr. Starr say to a

young child or teenager if the child asks you, 'Why should I read?'"

>> KEVIN STARR: Boy, that's a wonderful question. Why should you read? Some things are so simple and profound, I can't --

>> AUDIENCE: Why should you eat?

>> KEVIN STARR: I need help from the audience.

>> PRES. MICHAEL GORMAN: I'll take a stab at an answer. Because if you don't, you will have a perpetually stunted interior life that, unless you're some kind of creative genius, a one in a million, -- if you don't read, your panorama, your horizons will be so limited, your experience in relating to the world will be so elemental that you will never appreciate the joys of the imagination and the flowering of creativity.

>> KEVIN STARR: Of course, Michael, this is a teenager we are talking to. A significant amount of teenagers are from another planet; they are beamed down. For instance, a friend of mine, a professor at Stanford, went to the University of Minnesota to teach as a visiting professor. He announces in a classroom like this: "The test will be next week. It will be on the Colonial period from Cotton Mather to Benjamin Franklin." All the students understand that. Then he says that in Southern California when you announce that the test will be next week from Cotton Mather to Franklin, the students raise their hands. "What is the test going to be about?" or "What course is this?" No one seems to know. So, in other words, dealing with a teenager, there are such multiple states of consciousness that are available to a teenager, I would have to say -- or a young person, why do they have to read? I have to watch for a hook. The Harry Potter hook you gave is wonderful. I try to find something that keys into their

experience as they find it, not something that threatens them later with impoverishment or fear, but something like being cool, with it, being one of the gang, being good at what you do. That is the direction I would look for, what that hint or hook would be.

>> PRES. MICHAEL GORMAN: I have a much more authoritarian personality. I think a teenager who asks that question is pretty much gone. I think about my daughters, who are both beautiful young ladies in their 30s now and who were avid readers as children. They were brought up in a bookish house, they were read to, there were books everywhere that they read and read. My older daughter, you could have fired a pistol in the room while she was reading and she would be completely unaware of it.

As I recall, although the whole episode is pretty much a blur to me now, when they hit puberty they didn't read as much. They seemed to have other interests in life and didn't want to have anything to do with anything their parents were engaged in, like reading and so on.

But then in their 20s they came back to it. So I think if you're trying to persuade a teenager who has never read, to read, that would be a very, very difficult task indeed. But I think you'd be much more relaxed if they have read from childhood and they go through this period when they are not interested in anything that we would be interested in. They will come back to it, because they have had that experience.

And so I think you can say to a young person, or your very young people, "Because it's fun, because you'll enjoy it, because you'll learn so much, because you'll visit other countries without leaving the house" and that kind of thing. But if you're answering that for the first time to someone who

is 14, particularly a 14-year-old girl, good luck.

>> KEVIN STARR: We had a campaign in California called Read, Write, Win. I don't know whether Susan Hildreth kept it. But that was the closest we had come to appealing to teenagers and to motivating teenage males through their competitive instincts.

>> PRES. MICHAEL GORMAN: Here is the ultimate difficult question: "Please suggest one book you feel is essential to read."

>> KEVIN STARR: You mean just one book?

>> PRES. MICHAEL GORMAN: I think it's a variation on that desert island thing, where you'll be stranded on an island and which eight tunes would you take with you? If they say you can take one book, which book would you take?

>> KEVIN STARR: This is Sunday so I would have to say the Bible. You've got everything there. You've got mysticism, wars, dynastic ambition, you've got love stories, politics. If I get the whole Bible, it's not one book, it's a literature, so if I had to take the choice, it would be that.

(Applause)

>> PRES. MICHAEL GORMAN: I happen to know Dr. Starr is a practicing Catholic. I'm a tribal Catholic. Those of you who are in either of our situations know the difference, and it's too long to explain it to the others.

(Laughter)

But, oddly enough, I would say the one thing that is essential to the understanding of English literature is the King James version of the Bible. That's not the Bible we had as Catholics when I was young. You know, somebody once said of Shakespeare that his work is full of quotations. If you take the King James Bible, just open it at any page, there will not

be one page where there is not a combination of words that is somehow imprinted in your mind that you've encountered in novels, poems, in other manifestations of English literature. So I would say that would be the essential thing. If you really want to understand, that's to me where modern English literature stems from. I'm using "modern" in the sense of post-1500.

Other than that, and I do believe on a desert island you can have the Bible, which other book would you take?

>> KEVIN STARR: Which other one?

>> PRES. MICHAEL GORMAN: I would say, particularly for a younger person, *David Copperfield*. Partly because Dickens is my favorite author, with the exception of PG Wodehouse, who said, "When it comes down to it, my books [PG Wodehouse's] are better than Tolstoy's because they are shorter and they have more jokes in them." By that standard, Wodehouse is my favorite. But *David Copperfield*, which was the novel about Dickens' own life in fictional terms, contains everything about the struggle to realize yourself as a person, the interaction with other people in the world.

There must be other wonderful works of literature originally written in other languages, none of which I'm capable of appreciating to the full as you can when you read another language fully.

But *David Copperfield* is a wonderful book. It's a wonderful story. It's beautifully written. It has so much psychological depth and drama that I would say, if you had to have one thing to read for the rest of your life, that would be it.

Do you have another book other than the Bible?

>> KEVIN STARR: Another one other than the Bible, that's quite a challenge. I recently did -- in *The Week* magazine, where you list books that you recommend to people, and I had to remember how powerful these great novels were to me in my teen years. Hervey Allen's *Anthony Adverse*, those great big sweeping epics -- Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, Mitchell's *Gone With The Wind*. It would probably be *Les Miserables*. As much as, like you say, Dickens does, *Les Miserables* has mythology, a sweep to it. The novels that swept you have the world in them. And novels like *Scaramouche* or *Brideshead Revisited*. I'd have to sort through there and pick out one or the other. But *David Copperfield* -- and since I'm a practicing Catholic, I can be told what to do rather easily -- if you handed me *David Copperfield* and said be happy with this, I'd be happy.

(Laughter)

>> PRES. MICHAEL GORMAN: Actually, the list of books that Kevin just mentioned includes some great and not so great, and somebody once wrote it doesn't have to be great literature to change your life. Many of us have read a book which like *Gone With The Wind* is not up there in the pantheon of American letters, and you're supposed to prefer William Faulkner, but it can change your life. If you get to it at the right time and right age and it transforms your view of the world, then great literature or not, it's a great book.

Any other questions, any epithets? Just shout.

This is interesting, it's something I'm totally unqualified to comment on, but I probably will anyway. Thank you very much.

>> PRES. MICHAEL GORMAN: "What do you think of graphic novels?"

>> KEVIN STARR: Well, I always loved the funny papers. I miss things like *Terry and the Pirates*, *Prince Valiant* and some of the funny comic strips that we don't have anymore. They would take you across stories, 10-, 15-week sequences. So I think graphic novels are a very valid, fine thing. And in certain cases, they are ambitious.

>> PRES. MICHAEL GORMAN: I think the word "novel" is wrong. They are stories and pictures. There should be another term. But I'm reminded of comic books that were popular in the '50s. A man called, what was his name, Frederic Wertham, wrote a book about the corruption of the innocent and how the comic book *Superman* had coded sexual messages in it and an entire generation of children was being corrupted by them. They had hearings in Congress, and, you know, they were going to ban comic books, and most libraries didn't collect them or anything like that.

But my experience as a child has led me to believe that you can live on several different levels. You can enjoy comic books or graphic novels or the funny pages at the same time as you're reading novels, at the same time as you're reading poetry or the same time, given my kind of temperament, as you're trying to write poetry, which thank God never sees the light of day. But you can live at many levels. I'd be rather worried about somebody, particularly an older teenager, who read nothing else but graphic novels.

They are read very extensively by Japanese adults. I noticed that in Japan. They are read openly. You rarely see an adult on a bus with a comic book in America, but there they read graphic novels. The graphics are higher quality, of course.

>> PRES. MICHAEL GORMAN: "Comment on the ability of a person to build mental pictures as a result of reading as opposed to building mental pictures through watching television and the resulting impact on critical thinking and skills."

>> KEVIN STARR: The comment is on the differences between the two?

>> PRES. MICHAEL GORMAN: Yes. The differences and what is the impact on critical thinking.

>> KEVIN STARR: There were a number of studies that say too much television watching for young people makes them listless and leads to personality disorders, lack of concentration, anxiety, trouble sleeping. I never heard anybody say that about reading books.

>> PRES. MICHAEL GORMAN: Right.

>> KEVIN STARR: And whether television tells you too much and fills it out for you, the sheer anthropology of watching television is a threat to self or the sheer anthropology of reading is a valid thing for itself, I think it's powerful to suggest.

>> PRES. MICHAEL GORMAN: Television is passive. The stereotypes are embedded in your mind, rather than you building your own pictures, your own interpretation. That's why most of us, if we love a book, we almost hate to see a film of it or a television series of it, because we have our own pictures of these characters. And why should some, you know, mummer in a painted face impersonate a much loved character? It requires more creativity to build the pictures out of the story and the book. But on the other hand, I'm suspicious because I've reached an age when I don't like some aspects of modern technology and I don't like some aspects of television. I

think it was Jonathan Miller, the English humorist and writer, who said, "As you get old, the world becomes increasingly unrecognizable and that's how you become reconciled to dying."

(Laughter)

So, with that cheerful thought -- no. Sorry.

(Laughter)

What I'm thinking about is that it is the tendency of the elders to be suspicious of new forms of entertainment. I can remember my late father, God rest his soul, shouting at me and my now late, alas, next youngest brother, that, "You boys" -- we used to call it the wireless, the radio -- "All you want to do is listen to the wireless all day." He grew up before the radio, so it wasn't such a big deal in his life, but it was in ours. We didn't have televisions. I'm sure if we had television it would have been television. As long as you keep the reading going, you'll get over the mindless watching of television. It's the people who don't do other things and who succumb to the mindless watching of television.

>> PRES. MICHAEL GORMAN: [Reads] "Dr. Starr, I hate to bring this up for fear that someone -- and I'll not repeat the name -- is in the audience. But THANK YOU, in capital letters, for addressing the published topic of this session. I attended the Midwinter President's Program. I used to be a fan of Andrei Codrescu, but I was appalled by his rudeness and the remarks that were off topic. Thank you for addressing us in such an excellent manner. Bravo."

>> KEVIN STARR: Thank you.

(Applause)

>> PRES. MICHAEL GORMAN: I think we have reached the end of our conversation. Thank you so much for being here.

Before I release you into the semi-tropical evening, I'd like to mention that tomorrow morning at 8:00 in the Convention Center, there is a session called "Meet John Doe" where we will meet the four people involved in the infamous John Doe case of the National Security Letter case. They will talk about what happened to them and the impact on their lives. I'm going to moderate it. I think it's in Room 272. It's in the program but it was a late-breaking kind of thing, so it wasn't in COGNOTES. 8:00 tomorrow morning called "Meet John Doe".

>> PRES. MICHAEL GORMAN: Immediately after this program Kevin will be doing book signings. I recommend his books thoroughly. His historical books about California are unsurpassed.

Thank you so much for attending. This session is adjourned.

(Applause)

(End of session 5:15 p.m.)

Captioning provided by:

Caption First, Inc.
P.O. Box 1924
Lombard, IL 60148

This text is being provided in a rough draft format. Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) is provided in order to facilitate communication accessibility and may not be a totally verbatim record of the proceedings.
