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Comments from the Chair

Andy McCue

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SABR had an excellent convention in Milwaukee. Last I heard, attendance was approaching 600, the second largest number ever. Bob Buege and the locals did an excellent job. Wrigley Field was a joy and the scale and design of Miller Park were certainly impressive.

Twenty-three people attended our Committee meeting on July 13.

Skip McAfee, our newsletter editor and one of our most prolific creators of book indexes, agreed to do a how-to manual for book indexes. As we have started to do more indexes, and as some of our indexes have begun to appear in commercial products, we need to have more consistency in the indexes we turn out. We don't envision the manual being more than a couple of pages, but it should prove invaluable to indexers.

I also sought volunteers for an attempt to digitize some of the Committee's older work. SABR's Internet Committee (IC) has made great progress in improving the organization's Web site. IC will soon be seeking content for that Web site and I thought providing some of the Bibliography Committee's old Research Guides would be useful. However, none of them exist in electronic format. What is called for is someone who has a scanner with good OCR software and a lot of patience. I'm not sure how well this project will go, but I see the need for it. If anyone is interested, please contact me.

Another idea we kicked around was providing reviews for baseball books for the SABR Web site. These do no need to be major reviews, but might be the kind of quick description and judgement provided by Amazon.com users to their Web site. Once the SABR Web site is up and running, we should discuss this idea more thoroughly.

Most of our time at the Committee meeting was spent discussing The Baseball Index (TBI). Elsewhere in this issue of the newsletter is a plea for funds that was made at the meeting. It outlines what we need to mount TBI on the Web as a database available to the entire SABR community and all interested in baseball research. I would urge you to read it and to respond to it if at all possible. This project is the core of what our Committee should be doing.

The response we received at the meeting was very gratifying. Ted Hathaway and I both spoke and answered questions. By the end, Skip McAfee, Alma and Fred Ivor-Campbell, Steve Milman, Dick Miller, Bernie Esser, Terry Sloope, Ted, and myself had all made donations which give us a substantial leg up on what we are seeking. I hope all of you can help as well. I would be happy to talk to any of you about making a donation by phone, e-mail, or snail mail. I can answer questions about why we're doing what we are doing and about the mechanics of making a donation.

Please welcome two new Committee members: Stephen Johnson (61 King St., Oberlin, OH 44074) and Sean Holtz (11400 SW 40 Terrace, Miami, FL 33165). Sean is the creator of the Baseball Almanac Web site: www.baseball-almanac.com

Roger Erickson has added to our collection of indexes for books that were published without one: *Pennant Race* by Jim Brosnan (1962). It's available from Len Levin at the SABR Research Library, 282 Doyle Ave., Providence, RI 02906-3355. Also, University of Nebraska Press plans to republish Michael Seidel's *Streak* (1988) concerning Joe Di-

Maggio in 1941 and contacted us about doing an index for the book. Skip McAfee has taken on the task. The book and new index is scheduled to be published in 2002.

Bringing The Baseball Index to the Web: A Funding Request

Andy McCue and Ted Hathaway

A decade ago, when Frank Phelps asked Andy to help Ted try to realize the idea for an electronic catalog of baseball research materials, we frankly had limited hopes for success. The world of baseball books and articles seemed so huge and the resources of the Bibliography Committee so small that we wondered how much we would really be able to achieve.

Committee members know what we have achieved. Through the hard work of volunteers such as yourself, we have been able to push the database to more than 160,000 citations. We have substantially all the baseball books ever written and a strong foundation of the world of magazine articles. We have received financial and administrative support from several generations of SABR boards and from the Cleveland office. But mostly the size and the quality of the database is a tribute to the time and energy you and similar volunteers have spent reading magazines, pulling books off shelves, and translating all that information into The Baseball Index (TBI) format.

We are now close to realizing our major goal: making your work available to all baseball researchers in a convenient format on the Internet. And, once again, we are turning to you for help in realizing that goal.

Daniel Levine (DML Co., Houston), who is also working on the development of SABR's Web page, has begun work on the TBI database. We have every confidence in Daniel's abilities and dedication. He has shown not only a willingness to give us the lowest costs possible, but has also been flexible and accommodating to our needs. We also believe that someone with strong baseball interests and knowledge should work on our project. And that's Daniel.

Working with Ted, Daniel came up with a plan to take us to the next level, and beyond. DML Co. is willing to do the necessary work at a price below their normal charges, but the process will still take money.

Using revenue generated through the sale of TBI data, the first step has already been taken: cleaning up the database structurally and making the data more consistent. The basic database was designed a decade ago, with the software and level of database knowledge available at that time. Both have improved greatly in those ten years, but our database structure has not.

Here are the next steps, along with Daniel's estimates of what each step will cost.

1) We need a basic Internet search function and a capacity to manage the database from remote locations. The basic search form is what you would find on the screen to search for information about a particular player, ballpark, team, or other topic. It would be searchable by authors, named persons, and topics. Once the initial search was done, the search engine would allow the results to be browsed and would allow the user to review other persons and topics covered in the book or article. The database will be mounted on the SABR Web site and could be password-limited to SABR members. The database management function will allow us to keep the database on a remote computer as a unit. Cur-

rently, it resides in three separate files on Ted's and my home computers. This management function will make the database easier to keep together and to manage, but we will also need the capacity to update, correct, and add to the information from afar. Cost estimate: \$8000.

2) We need the software to distinguish among users. We have discussed many models that would control access to the database, and the money which could be charged to people using the database. We have reached no firm conclusions, and the ultimate decision on this issue would have to be made by the SABR board. But, in any case, we will need software that would allow us to distinguish between different groups of people (SABR members and non-members, institutions that have paid a fee for access and those that haven't), between levels of access (e.g., SABR members can have unlimited searches but non-members would be limited to 25 citations), and, ultimately, between levels of price (x for members, y for non-members). That software should be flexible enough to allow changes in criteria as usage develops. Cost estimate: \$1700.

3) We need to upgrade the basic search function to allow users to pay online. This would naturally follow on the criteria for the previous step. Once we have decided who will pay and at what level, we will need the software to collect the money. This would be the adaptation of software already commercially available, such as the systems we use to pay for books at Amazon.com. It would have to contain significant security features. Cost estimate: \$3700.

4) We need to upgrade the database to a more sophisticated database program. Currently, the database is maintained as a Microsoft Access file. The database is gradually outgrowing the capabilities of this program and it will eventually have to convert to an industrial-strength database program. That switch will be necessary to prevent slowdowns in response time. Cost estimate: \$3400.

As we mentioned, Daniel has already cleaned up the database. The SABR board has also agreed to set aside future earnings from TBI to be plowed back into development of the database. Although we have presented the entire process, along with the estimated costs, clearly the most important step is to get it on the Web and available to researchers. The remaining steps we could accomplish at a later date, or as soon as funding becomes available.

SABR can fund only a small part of the \$8000 to create these search capabilities. We are asking you—the Bibliography Committee members who have contributed so much support and effort to The Baseball Index—to help us fund the balance of the costs. We ask you to contribute whatever you feel you can. I can think of no project that better exemplifies what the Bibliography Committee should be doing than this one.

If you have any questions, please contact Andy (909-787-4954) or Ted (612-908-0299).

The Baseball Index (TBI) 2nd Quarter 2001 Report

Ted Hathaway

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The TBI database is currently divided into three parts reflecting the three principal types of information sources: Books, Book Sections (or chapters), and Articles. TBI has grown over the past eight years from zero to 163,301 cataloged records, comprising 130,094 articles, 14,479 book sections, and 18,728 books.

In terms of sheer coverage of existing book titles, the **Books** section of the database is nearest to completion of all three databases. We estimate that more than 80% of all books ever published on baseball are now contained in this database. Surveys of universal bibliographic databases such as WorldCat and OCLC support this estimate. About 46% of the books cataloged for this database have been recorded in full detail. It should be noted that the majority of the remaining 56% consists of media guides, yearbooks, and instructional.

The **Book Sections** database has grown steadily over time and will likely continue to do so. In addition to containing parts of baseball

works, there are also a host of sports and non-sports publications that contain significant sections on baseball; many of these have been cataloged already.

The **Articles** section is far and away the largest part of the database and will continue to grow as many periodicals remain to be indexed.

We have explored ways of making TBI available to member and public use. To that end, a research service was set up to provide searching through an intermediary, along with a modest fee for obtaining the information from the database. To date, the service has received more than a thousand requests, with more than 200 paying customers resulting in receipts for SABR totaling more than \$7500.

In 1998, a CD-ROM recordable drive was purchased and after making numerous corrections and updates to the database, it was ready for distribution. Since the first sale at last year's convention, a total of 60 copies have been sold, with receipts totaling \$5045.

In 2000, TBI project directors met with James Robinson of the Idea Logical Co. to discuss the possibility of mounting TBI on Idea Logical's "Baseball Online Library" on the popular CBS Sportsline Web site. The SABR Board approved this venture in Sept. 2000. Sadly, Sportsline has still as yet not seen fit to take bring this effort to fruition, through no fault of the Idea Logical Co. Despite this disappointment, James was able to extract data from the TBI database and attach it as bibliographies to the thousands of player biographies on the Baseball Online Library site. SABR and TBI are amply credited for these data and it has brought much attention to the database.

TBI has grown steadily over the years and is, frankly, becoming increasingly difficult to manage. It has always been the product of many volunteers, and maintaining quality control has always been a great challenge—perhaps too great. The Books and Book Sections of the database underwent a major overhaul this past winter. The Articles section is yet to be done. It will likely take a very long time to complete. Finally, the database has become so large that it is slowly outgrowing the usefulness of its software (MS Access). Attention, therefore, has turned to improving the structure and functionality of the database.

To this end, it was proposed, and the SABR Board approved in Jan. 2001, that TBI revenues be targeted to the improvement of the database. Daniel Levine (DML Co.) was hired to develop TBI, not only effecting improvement in the database itself, but creating a means to make it usable over the Web. Daniel is currently working on accomplishing this aspect. We hope that in the near future our long-time dream of real public access to the wealth of data provided by TBI will become realized.

If we assume that TBI continues to grow in the same manner as before, we will see the following patterns develop:

The Books database will continue to grow slowly as new titles are added each year and various older titles are found and added. More significantly, a steadily increasing number of existing records will be improved as more books are completely cataloged. Better access to the content of books will be the result and the usefulness of this database will increase.

The Book Sections database will also continue to grow, but perhaps at a slower pace. This database was set up to address biographical and team history compilations, certain kinds of anthologies and collections, and the many books that contain sections on baseball along with other subjects. The number of these kinds of sources is more finite than other kinds of baseball books. Furthermore, most of the current records in this database are fully cataloged. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect an eventual "completion" of this database (excepting newly published titles). It will likely also remain the smallest of the three databases.

The Articles database represents the labors of Hercules for this project. Based on the numbers for *The Sporting News* (39,386 records), we could estimate that TSN alone might result in a quarter of a million cataloged records. However, what has been done with TSN is significant, and much work has been done toward the completion of many other publications.

In the past year, we have continued work on major publications such as *The Sporting News*, *Baseball Magazine*, *USA Today Baseball Weekly*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Baseball Digest*, and *Sport*. These represent the bulk of our contributions. We have also continued our work on "non-sport" publications and believe we have completed coverage of most of these publications from the 20th century.

Volunteers who have submitted at least a thousand records include: Brad Sullivan (52,792—holy cow!), Ted Hathaway (33,130), Tim Cashion (28,833), Andy McCue (9151), Bernie Esser (5750), Joe Murphy (4976), Terry Sloope (4068), Terry Smith (2230), Bob Boynton (1407), and Steve Milman (1094). John McMurray is at 999 (just one more, John!).

TBI Statistics

File	Level 5	Level 4	Other	Total
Books	6,487	2,258	9,983	18,728
Book sections	10,151	4,105	223	14,479
Articles	120,924	1,446	7,724	130,094
Total	137,562	7,809	17,930	163,301

Bibliography Committee Annual Report for 2001

Andy McCue

Committee Chair

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The Bibliography Committee was founded in 1983 by Frank Phelps and seeks to discover, organize, and provide information about books and other research materials which might be of interest to SABR members and other baseball researchers.

The committee currently has 56 members working on a variety of projects.

Our major project is an annotated electronic catalog of baseball research materials, called The Baseball Index (TBI). In the past year, TBI has grown by 15% to 163,301 books, articles, films, and other research sources. It now includes 18,728 books, 14,479 book sections, and 130,094 magazine and newspaper articles. The database covers items from 1850s magazine articles to books released this spring. As a volunteer effort, this accomplishment is solely the work of a dedicated crew of volunteers, starting with project team leaders Ted Hathaway and Andy McCue. Top volunteers include Brad Sullivan, Bernie Esser, Tim Cashion, Terry Sloope, Steve Milman, and Joe Murphy. The database has been accessed by more than 300 people and has produced \$2500 for the SABR treasury in the past year.

Ted Hathaway and I have been working with SABR member Daniel Levine to create the software which could place TBI on the World Wide Web and make it accessible to all SABR members. The SABR board of directors has approved our use of TBI revenues to continue to improve the database and create this software. In the past year, James Robinson (Idea Logical Co.) has been able to mount the database on the net to a limited degree, but our own software will allow us to make the full database available. If we can raise sufficient funds, we hope to have the database available, at least in rudimentary form, by the end of the year.

Two long-time Committee members continued to produce the committee's two longest-running projects. Committee vice-chair Skip McAfee has edited the Committee's newsletter since 1988 and continues to make improvements. Book reviews from Terry Smith and others highlight the newsletter. Reviews that have appeared in the Committee's newsletter are mounted at <http://sabr.bib.home.mindspring.com>.

Rich Arpi started his 14th year of researching and editing *Current Baseball Publications (CBP)*, the quarterly listing of baseball books and periodicals. CBP has been mounted on SABR's Web page to make it more accessible to all SABR members. It is available at www.sabr.org/cbp.shtml.

The Committee's project to provide indexes to important baseball books published without them continued successfully. Committee members produced indexes for eight books this year. Southern Illinois University Press began a program to republish the Putnam team histories with indexes provided by Committee members. The Cubs (index by Joe Murphy) and the Cardinals (index by Bob Boynton) were repub-

lished this year and the Dodgers, Giants, and Yankees are scheduled for 2002. All these indexes are available through Len Levin's SABR Research Library.

Book Reviews

Leverett T. (Terry) Smith

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A WHOLE NEW GAME: Off the Field Changes in Baseball, 1946-1960

John P. Rossi. Jefferson (N.C.): McFarland & Co., 1999. \$32.50sc

Rossi concludes his book by stating (p.220-221): "The generation after World War II witnessed some of the most exciting baseball in the game's history and one of the most innovative eras administratively and structurally. Major league baseball went through an era of crisis as dramatic as any in its long, complex history. In spite of a leadership that often was puerile, mean spirited and even cowardly, the game survived."

He begins his book by writing (p.1): "[The period 1946-1960] is often labeled a 'golden era' [by those who focus on the game on the field], but I contend that the years from roughly the end of World War II until the first wave of expansion in the early 1960s saw major league baseball confront a series of crises that have been overlooked or that were little understood at the time."

Rossi is among those American historians who are engaged in revising our understanding of the 1950s from an era of "peace, progress, and prosperity" to an era of radical transition. Though his book is not entirely successful in doing so, it does deal with many of the materials necessary for such a revision.

Readers need to be warned, first of all, that although the book's subtitle promises a focus on off-the-field changes, much of the book is devoted to summaries of the game on the field. This can make for frustration, but I think that Rossi has in mind that ultimately the game on the field and events off the field are significantly connected. He uses the fact of declining attendance throughout the period to suggest the presence of crisis. In fact, it isn't always clear that Rossi agrees with those who, like Harold Rosenthal, think of the 1950s as "the ten best years of baseball". He cites the domination of New York teams, particularly the New York Yankees, as "disastrous for baseball competition", resulting in pennant races that too often "lack excitement", or are "particularly boring" (p.59, 107, 164). He doesn't much care for the style of play, either. He initially refers to the game on the field as "an old, slow game" (p.3). In 1954, he contends that "the internal game was flat and lifeless—homers rose as did strikeouts" (p.113).

Oddly, if one rereads the conclusion cited in the first paragraph above, one will find Rossi contending that the game on the field was "some of the most exciting ... in the game's history". What gives here? I think Rossi is stuck between two ways of viewing the game on the field during the 1950s. The statistics tell him the game must have been boring. The presence of players such as Jackie Robinson, Willie Mays, Hank Aaron (whose picture is on the book's cover), Mickey Mantle, and Luis Aparicio tells him something quite different: that the way the game is played is undergoing radical change. He is reluctant to regard Robinson as an agent of change in styles of play, remarking that convention kept him from stealing more bases, but surely Robinson's base running—his ability to unnerve the team on the field—was a harbinger of a new way of playing the game. And in Willie Howard Mays, the 1950s produced this fan's candidate for the best boring player of all time. Mays combined speed and daring on the bases with extraordinary power at bat, attributes of many of the best young offensive players of the fifties—Mantle, Aaron, Robinson, to name a few. No plodders here.

Rossi is certainly aware of all this, and it's a wonder he doesn't stress it more, interested as he is in the period as an era of change. His treatment of the Chicago White Sox is of interest. He says of the 1959 team that won the American League pennant "in many ways [they] were a throwback to the deadball era of low-run games, stolen bases and hit-

and-running" (p.189). The White Sox of the 1950s might as easily be regarded as an anticipation of things to come, employing speed as an offensive weapon and led by Latin-American and African-American players. Rossi knows this. Toward the end of the book he writes that "black players were responsible for restoring the element of speed to the game" (p.217). He might logically have developed this side of his thesis more clearly.

Off the field, one might wish for a more detailed consideration of baseball's crises. Rossi treats only briefly the various Congressional investigations and the formation of the Major League Baseball Players Association. His focus is mainly on accounting for the drop in attendance that occurred throughout the fifties. In fact, it would not be too far afield to wonder if Rossi didn't intend these parts of the book to form a context for the game on the field, even though the title tells us not to. He examines many of the problems of the era: adjusting to television, large sums spent on untried players, the automobile and the development of suburbia, the fate of the minors, urban blight, the rise of the South and West. These and events within the game—such as the Yankees domination of the American League—propelled the game into a new era characterized by continual expansion.

Rossi is right. The period of 1946 to 1960 was a crucial transitional era in American history, and we should not be surprised to find baseball in a comparable state.

CY YOUNG: A Baseball Life

Reed Browning. Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 2000. 283p. \$26.95

This book already has received considerable praise from reviewers and readers. The Seymour Medal committee selected it as a runner-up, citing it as an "exemplary baseball biography". What could they have meant?

This is an academic study and contains the usual academic impediments, including some 31 pages of end notes, a 13-page bibliography, and an index. In addition, there are 16 pages of photographs. However, the book is not written in any of the specialized languages academics (or sabermetricians, for that matter) often use—seemingly to avoid being understood by the general reader. In fact, Browning announces in his preface that he is "imagining [him]self in conversation with the reader". The result is an unusually readable book.

The text contains an initial chapter on Young's life before he became a celebrity and a final chapter on the 43 years he lived after retiring from baseball. In between are nine chapters that describe Young's major-league career and five that treat, variously, changes in the game itself and aspects of Young's talent and character. There are three appendices: estimates of Young's salary in each of his years as a professional; an assessment of Young's greatest games; and an essay on the problem of how many wins Young actually achieved.

Over the past 30 years, the conventions of writing a baseball biography have changed considerably. There is more attention to accuracy now, more analysis than anecdote. As examples of biographies, Browning had before him Charles Alexander's *Ty Cobb* (1984) and John McGraw (1988), Robert Creamer's *Babe Ruth* (1974), and the DeValerías' and Arthur Hittner's *Honus Wagner* (1996), to name just a few that appear in his bibliography. Academic or not, each of these approaches its subject with a new kind of seriousness and asks a different set of questions than previous sports biographies.

As a reader of biographies, I always want to know why the author thinks his subject's life is meaningful. And I look for three areas of meaning: the individual's relation to the culture of his times, his relation to the history of his profession, and the nature of his character and achievement.

Browning deals with Young's relation to the culture of his times in two ways. In the preface, Browning situates Young "in his wider national context". He notes that the years between 1890 and 1911 were a time of "turbulent changes" that transformed "the cultural, economic, and social landscape of the nation" (p.x). Population growth, urban growth, and technological change occurred rapidly. Then in a chapter

("True Nobility") late in the book, Browning analyzes the shape of Young's celebrity. He acknowledges the presence of different, competing "versions of American nobility" at the time. The virtues that Young embodied in the press ("the rustic", "the plainspoken", a man of "integrity and hard work") were "increasingly linked to a heroic past that would be understood by any reader as emblematically American" (p.180). This was, of course, "a nobility bred by rural life", and Young was "cast as the carrier of older virtues" (p.182).

What about Young's relation to the history of baseball during his career? Browning answers this much more fully than the first question. He remarks in the preface that baseball, like the country, was "undergoing formative shifts" between 1890 and 1911, mentioning important alterations in rules, equipment, and strategy (p.xi). Browning attributes Young's greatness in part to the fact that he achieved what he did "while coping with a stream of alterations in the way baseball was played" (p.215). He remarks on Young's "temperamental aversion to the adoption of new rules even as he manifested an almost inexhaustible capacity to adjust to them" (p.123). Browning looks into the question of the "pitcher-batter confrontation" and the decision to lengthen the distance between the pitcher's box and home plate to 60 ft, six inches. He notes that while this brought many pitchers' careers to an end, Young was one of the few pitchers "unaffected by the change" (p.36). In looking at Young's remarkable 1901 season, he considers the effect of the new American League. Browning always keeps the changing nature of the game in view.

And, finally, it ought to go without saying, we should learn about the subject's character and his achievements. Young himself, after all, is Browning's central focus. A recital of Young's pitching, year by year, makes up much of the book—eight of the 15 chapters. Sometimes this kind of recital can become tedious, but Browning doesn't let it. Varying his accounts of individual years, he also intersperses chapters on other subjects among the yearly summaries.

Browning has a special problem dealing with Young's character, which he describes in the preface, noting "the chief source of information about Young as a private figure must be the reportage of baseball writers, and these considerations oblige the biographer to treat this source cautiously" (p.xii). Reporters described games rather than focusing on players in the pre-television age, they weren't very knowledgeable or well-traveled, and they tended to typecast players. Browning described his task, as a consequence, as "not to discredit the received view of Cy Young but, by scrutinizing the contemporary press coverage and other kind of testimony from those who knew him, to add detail and nuance to it" (p.xiii). Because Browning takes care to examine all these dimensions of Young's life, this biography is really exemplary.

The Wisdom of Ballplayers

"World War III would render all baseball statistics meaningless." (John Lowenstein, 1993)

"Even Napoleon had his Watergate." (Danny Ozark, 1979)

"I'm happy to be part of the Yankee stigma." (Paul O'Neill, on being traded by Cincinnati, 1992)

"The ball hit my bat." (Denny Neagle, a notoriously weak-hitting pitcher, explaining how he hit a grand-slam homer, 1995)

"He hit it a lot further than it went." (Curt Young, on a Rickey Henderson homer, 1986)

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