



By the Book

One of the first jobs that faces me with the arrival of each new year is the job of getting the annual bookkeeping done for my business. In recent years this is much easier than it used to be, because I have my customer data completely computerized, and getting the total of sales and receipts is literally a simple matter of 'pushing a button'.

Working out my expenses for the year takes a bit more time, because these are not automatically computerized. As I make purchases during the year I of course carefully annotate and store the receipts, but at some point this data has to be entered into the computer. It usually takes a half-day or so, and this time around I did that work on new year's eve.

I use my own custom-written computer software for all my bookkeeping, and to help this chore feel a little less boring I programmed it to give me some 'sonic feedback' whenever I do any data entry. For example, each time I type in a receipt - from the Post Office, say - and then hit the 'enter' key, I am presented with a most satisfying 'zap' sound as the information is accepted into the database. It then produces a tantalizing little 'bloop bleep', ready for the next item to be entered. You may laugh at this, but it does help keep things moving along, and the work is done before I know it!

(But I can imagine the chaos that would result if this were a busy office, with everybody using my software. Zap, Pow! ... Beep Beep Beep ... It would sound like a video game arcade!)

In any case, the data was soon all entered into the software, and I could then have a look at how my year had gone from the financial point of view. Each spring I publish these results in my newsletters, so many of my readers are aware that over the recent few years things have been pretty shaky for me money-wise. I've been making interesting prints, but subscriber numbers have been fairly low, resulting in a fair amount of red ink at the end of the year.

But I am happy to report that this time things are looking up, and looking up quite a bit! The current 'Mystique of the Japanese Print' series is well subscribed, and because I have been a 'good boy' and have stuck to the schedule of one print out the door every month, I am well into the black this time around, climbing back up to the sales level I was at four years ago, before this recent 'slump'.

And in a good-news/bad-news situation, at least partly due to the fact that I was very tight-fisted and kept expenses very low last year, there is actually a nice little profit this time. That is bad news because it means I will pay quite a bit more income tax this spring, and this will have a domino effect - increasing my resident's taxes and my medical insurance too. But I have no real complaint about that, as I feel our tax burden in this society is not unreasonable at all.

And starting this year, the annual year-end bookkeeping will have a bit of an extra frisson to it! My daughters started up their fashion business about a year and a half ago, and I suppose that this week they too must be working on the same chore - sorting out all the receipts and coming up with the year-end totals.

Theirs is a pretty new business of course, with nowhere near the 20+ year history that mine has, but it'll be interesting to see how they have done at this stage. What do you think, should I start taking bets on how many years it'll take for them to catch me?

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