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Librarian/Publisher Interview-Marcia Tuttle

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*The Faxon Company*

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Librarian/Publisher Interview —
Marcia Tuttle

by Judy Luther (The Faxon Company)

Marcia took time from her busy sched-
ule as Head of Serials at UNC, Editor of
the electronic Newsletter on Serials Prin-
ging Issues, and Lecturer at the School of
Information and Library Science at UN-
Chapel Hill, for this interview before her
class that evening. It's not often that
we have the fun of discussing serials for
several hours in a classroom setting.

ATG: How did you get started?

MT: My parents said they always
knew I was going to be a librarian since I
put call numbers and checkout slips in
my books when I was growing up. Then
I worked in the library in junior high and
again when I was at Duke University.

ATG: Where did you go to library
school? How did you come to UN-
Chapel Hill?

MT: I began with a major in religion
at Duke before I went to library school at
Emory University. So it was natural for
me to go to work at Princeton Theologi-
cal Seminary, as a cataloger. For one
hour a week I worked at the reference
desk; however, when a position came
open for a reference librarian, I was not
considered, as I was a woman. Remem-
ber, this was 30 years ago!

Princeton University would let me be
a reference librarian, so I moved there
for two years. Part of the time I worked
at the catalog reference desk. Often there
wasn't enough to do, so I was bored. I
left there to be Head of Reference at the
University of Vermont, and I found out
it was a lot more fun to be a reference
librarian than a head of reference. They
got to do the fun stuff! I've never par-
ticularly enjoyed management or been
very good at it; I want to do. That's one
of the reasons I've stayed in my present
job so long; I would be miserable as an
AUL and so would those I managed.

After a second winter in Vermont,
this one with a record-setting 5 straight
days below zero, I began writing letters
— to Duke, UNC, and Emory. When
spring break came, I drove down to visit
my parents and interview at Duke and
UNC. My father had been a member of
the first Duke football team and is a big
Duke fan, so I have been brainwashed,
anti-Carolina all my life.

The Duke job was Reference Librar-
ian on East Campus, but the job at UNC
was Head of the Interlibrary Service Cen-
ter: interlibrary loan, which I had done at
both Princeton and Vermont, and Head
of the North Carolina Union Catalog. It
also paid a few thousand dollars more.

I went on up to the mountains to visit
my folks and told them that if UNC off-
ered me the job, I would take it. My dad
still denies he said this, but he looked at
me and said slowly, "I don't know if I
can stand to have a daughter of mine
over at Carolina or not." I was offered
both jobs and took the one at UNC.

Several months later they created a
serials department and asked me to head
it. That was 25 years ago — May 1969.
Prior to that, serials were part of acquisi-
tions and the current journals were in the
reference departments. There was no gen-
eral periodicals reading room as there is
now. When they built the undergraduate
library, that freed up some space.

ATG: Is there a job that might be
interesting enough to lure you away from
serials?

MT: I can retire in three years, and
I've been threatening to go down to Har-
riss Teeter and be a grocery checkout
clerk to show them that it can be done
well! I've also threatened to work for
Waldenbooks so I can get more off the
books I buy. Actually, I would like to do
some travel and some consulting. Last
fall I was able to spend some time work-
ing on a new edition of my book on
serials management, which should be
published in 1995. While I was working
on this project, I discovered a life out-
side of the traditional work environment.

ATG: You've played a significant
role in the serials profession, winning the
Bowker/Ulrich's award and editing the
Newsletter on Serials Pricing Issues.
How did this come about? How can folks
subscribe?

MT: It was probably my book Intro-
duction to Serials Management, pub-
lished by JAI Press in 1983, that earned
me the Bowker Award, presented at the
ALA annual conference in Chicago in
1985.

The newsletter began in 1989 while I
was Chair of the Committee on Serials
Pricing Issues, actually a subcommittee
of PVLR (Publisher/Vendor Library Re-
lations). The mission was to eliminate
duplicate effort about information on
journal pricing. I had just begun to use
BITNET and had previously used Cou-
rier, Faxon's email system.

Caroline Early of the National Agri-
cultural Library, PVLR chair, and I
brainstormed the newsletter idea and the
committee began the project. Julia
Blixrud (National Serials Data Project)
"invited" us to apply for an ISSN. We
neglected to go through the ALCTS Pub-
lishing Committee, which caused diffi-
culties later on and resulted eventually
in the newsletter being published by me,
rather than ALA.

I have begun work on a five year
index and plan to make all issues avail-
able on disk. We’ve done a business plan and now have more than 1700 subscribers worldwide. Ours was probably the first electronic newsletter for librarians and predates slightly PACS-L, ACQNET, and SERIALST.

The current editorial board is: Deana Astle from Clemson, Jerry Curtis from Springer-Verlag, Janet Fisher from MIT Press, Fred Friend from University College London, Chuck Hamaker from LSU, Daniel Jones from the University of Texas Health Science Center, Jim Mouw from the University of Chicago, and Heather Steele from Blackwell’s Periodicals Division.

To subscribe to the newsletter on the Internet, send a message to LISTSERV @GIBBS.OIT.UNC.EDU saying SUBSCRIBE PRICES [Your Name]. It is also available from Blackwell’s CONNECT, Readmore’s ROSS, and EBSCO in paper. The Newsletter is indexed in Citations for Serial Literature.

MT: Right in the middle! Last year the library canceled 24 high-priced low-use journals and will pay for article copies from them via commercial document delivery. At the same time, we are conducting a journal prioritization project in the hope of canceling low-use periodicals and adding new titles that better fit the needs of our users. We do make UnCover available for patrons to order and pay for their own articles.

MT: Serials librarians are an endangered species. But serials are far more complex than monographs and, I believe, require a serials specialist. However, the trend is to organize by function rather than form, so we’re seeing lots of serials departments being merged into acquisitions. The UNC Serials Department is still organized into acquisitions, binding/reading room, and holdings.

Technology offers us other options, and paper will continue to coexist as the standards shake down for electronic publications. There are, of course, the Red Sage and TULIP projects currently under development. We’re going to go through a period of turmoil, excitement, and frustration. But it still makes sense to buy what one needs.

MT: Technology has changed how we work in several ways. Tasks take less time and effort. Integrated library systems allow us to automate what we do and often result in reorganization of the workplace.

Exciting technology like email changes what we do. Electronic databases and document delivery via fax machines offer new options in terms of serials acquisitions and access.

Communication in the serials industry has grown, as evidenced by NASIG.

The electronic Newsletter on Serials Pricing Issues is another landmark event as the first of its kind. It originated to address a crisis but its continued growth indicates that the crisis has become a part of life.

MT: Well, I’m an avid Duke basketball fan. I like to read books and write books, knit sweaters, travel and exercise (at 6 am)!. I also share my house with two cats: Babyface (who is white and fluffy) and Brunhilde (a short hair tortoise). ◆

Ed note: Judy and I jockeyed about which one of us would get to interview the inimitable Marcia Tuttle. I have to tell you all that Marcia is one of my mentors and she was an early developer of the Charleston Conference and many of its characteristics. She is a “wow” person. Everything she does is like Wow! Thanks to both Marcia and Judy for this wonderful interview of one of the leading lights in librarianship. — KS

The 1994 (14th) Charleston Conference

Issues in Book and Serial Acquisition: The Savage Marketplace
November 3-5, 1994, Charleston, SC
Keynote Speaker: Dr. Jerry Campbell, Duke University

CALL FOR IDEAS/SPEAKERS/ETC.

The 1994 Charleston Conference will deal with issues regarding acquisitions, collection development and technical services, scholarly publishing and selection of print, electronic and other materials, vendering of materials, standards, and issues which impact the world of publishing, vendering and acquiring and accessing materials in the library environment. Many new features were instituted at the 1993 Charleston Conference including shorter hours, simulation rooms, and lively lunches. The 1994 Charleston Conference will carry on these traditions as well as some old ones and some new ones.

If you are interested in leading a discussion, acting as a moderator, or would like to make sure that we discuss a particular topic, please let us know. The Charleston Conference prides itself on creativity, innovation, flexibility and informality. If there is something you are interested in doing, please try it out on us. We’ll probably like it . . .

Send ideas by June 30, 1994 to: Judy Webster, Head, Acquisitions and Processing Team; University of Tennessee Library; 1015 Volunteer Blvd.; Knoxville, TN 37996-1000. Phone (615)974-4431; FAX (615)974-2708; Internet: Webster@UTKLIB.LIB.UTK.EDU ◆