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# Acquiring Minds Want to Know: How Many Librarians Would It Take...

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# And They Were There — Reports of Meetings

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**74th Annual Meeting, PTPL (Potomac Technical Processing Librarians) George Mason University, Johnson Center — October 23, 1998**

Report by **Kathy Miraglia** (Catholic University of America) & (PTPL Treasurer) <[miraglia@cua.edu](mailto:miraglia@cua.edu)>

See **PTPL Webpage** (<http://www.lib.virginia.edu/ptpl>) for Keynote Address and information about PTPL.



After a pleasant lunch, also at the Johnson Center, a short business meeting was conducted and then the afternoon session began. In the afternoon session a panel discussed “To Merge or Not to Merge: Libraries and Computer Centers.” **Robin Wagner**, Director of Library Services, **Gettysburg College**, related their experience with a merger attempt. Unfortunately, aspects of failure were built in from the start: no real advance notice, no advance discussions, lack of communication, no real understanding of the independent operations (how they might be the same or how they were different), the jamming together of both staffs in one building, and differences in job descriptions and pay scales. It didn’t take too long for the 1994 merger to break apart, but not before the entire campus was affected and both operations were impaired.

**Nancy Dagle**, Associate Director of Library and Information Services, **Bucknell**, spun an entirely different scenario. Bucknell, in 1997, also undertook the merger of the library and computing services. From the start it was managed better, and included library input. The success of the merger, she feels, was the result of cooperation, adequate communication and planning, staff involvement, and an understanding of human nature. Also, the two operations still maintain separate work-

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Technical Service Librarians from Washington, D.C., Virginia and Maryland attended the 74th Annual Meeting of the PTPL (Potomac Technical Processing Librarians) held at George Mason University, Johnson Center on Friday, October 23, 1998. The early part of the morning was spent on tours of the George W. Johnson Center which provides a non-traditional housing of library materials (videos, CD’s, books, serials, etc.). The open library stacks mix with a variety of services—banking, food court, bookstore, copy center, computer store, offices, study areas, and more. The official part of the program opened with the introduction of Keynote Speaker, **Janet Swan Hill**, President of **ALCTS** and Associate Director for Technical Services at **University of Colorado, Boulder**. Her entertaining and interesting speech, mixed with humor at times, gave insight into the role and image of technical service librarians and their contributions to librarianship. Ms. Hill has allowed us to reproduce her speech, in its entirety, on the PTPL Webpage.



## Acquiring Minds Want to Know — How Many Librarians Would It Take ...

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I thought for a change I would add a little humor to my column and play around with a variation of the old joke “how many librarians does it take to change a light bulb.” The impetus for this came when I was writing a presentation on integrating electronic materials into library collections and was pondering the complexity of this process.

So bear with me and have a little fun with this. I would love to hear variations from our readers. In this version the joke doesn’t hinge on the characteristics of the librarian, but rather on those of the light bulb.

If a light bulb were an electronic resource, how many librarians would it take to change a light bulb?

- 💡 One to select the light bulb. 💡 One to set up a demo of it.
- 💡 One to negotiate a contract to use it. 💡 One to determine how powerful the bulb should be. 💡 One to determine how many people can use the light. 💡 One to make sure the electricity is turned on. 💡 One to pay the electric bill. 💡 One to make sure it has been installed correctly. 💡 One to check to make sure it keeps working. 💡 One to make sure it stays in the same place.

- 💡 One to teach people how to use the bulb. 💡 One to advertise the existence of the bulb. 💡 One to see if anyone is using the light and how. 💡 One to describe the bulb. 💡 One to manage authorized access to the bulb. 💡 A committee to write the RFP to acquire the light bulb. 💡 A committee to review the effectiveness of the bulb and decide when to change it. 💡 A committee to write policies and procedures for changing the bulb. 💡 A consortium to provide widespread and remote access to the light.
- 💡 A committee to manage the consortium. 💡 A consortium of consortia to share information and help each one be more effective. 💡 Well, you get the idea! 💡

If you want to read a serious article about the complexity of managing electronic resources, go to **Ellen Finnie Duranceau’s** excellent article, “Beyond Print: Revisioning Serials Acquisitions for the Digital Age.” *The Serials Librarian* 33 (1/2): 83-106, 1998, which is based on her experience at MIT. 🐻