December 2000

The Millenium Perspective-Some random snapshots and recollections from a Faxon insider

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Recommended Citation
Aaron, Amira (2000) "The Millenium Perspective-Some random snapshots and recollections from a Faxon insider," Against the Grain: Vol. 12: Iss. 6, Article 9.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.3095

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The Millennium Isuue is a wonderful
project and brings back a
lot of memories. Somehow
this nostalgia from the early
days puts it all into perspective and reminds
us not to take ourselves too seriously!

Some random snapshots and important
relationships over the years:
As an undergraduate library student as-
sistant, my job at Boston University was to
catalog with a wonderful and formidable
instructor, Elizabeth Baughman. Betty, as we
came to know her, was diminutive in size
and huge in intellect and humor. One of my
favorite cataloging stories involves a test
question; we were asked to construct an LC
subject heading for a directory of associa-
tions interested in life on other planets.
Of course we all fell for the trap and came up
with: Life on Other Planets—Directories.

In addition to cataloging, we all took an
advanced course in systems, during which we
actually managed to alphabetize a small
list with punch cards using PLI — it only took us
a couple of hours to run!

My worst task at the UCLA Research Li-
brary as a library school student assistant
was cleaning the glue machine in the bindery.
But I got to be a master at using the electric eraser
without making too many holes while typing
tracings on UMI card sets. Little did I know
that I was dealing with aggregator records
(and still am!)

At Loyola Law School in downtown LA
(early 70s), we duplicated catalog cards by
way of this very old creaky mimeograph
machine. Ink was everywhere! Real progress
came as we began receiving the LC card sets.
Student assistants filed the cards above the
rod and we, as professionals, were privileged
to remove the rod and push the cards down
permanently.

Mid-70s back at UCLA and we received
the first OCLC terminal in the library — what
a notable day that was! We were not quite
sure what to do with it. No formal training
projects or materials existed, so we did our
own. Food and drink were expressly forbid-
den anywhere near that machine; it was
treated like gold!! In those days, we hosted
quite a few overseas visitors with cameras
who came to take pictures of the “computer
in the library.”

Also at UCLA, I participated at the very
beginning of the CONSER and NACO
projects with one of my favorite colleagues
and CONSER devotee, Ron Watson (who
else would proudly display CONSER on
his license plate?). Along the way, we also moved
from latest entry to successive cataloging and
changed thousands of headings in the cata-
l og a la AACR2. In the card catalog, that is
not an easy task! Using electric typewriters,
we figured out how to produce typed labels
as speedily as possible using some kind of
repeat function and then stuck them over
the old headings.

In the late 70s, Russell Shank, then Uni-
versity Librarian at UCLA, had the wisdom
to hire Dan Tomkery to automate the library
system and supported him in some hard-
 fought battles. Personally, Dan has had the
largest influence on my professional career
and is still a great boss and close friend as we
persevere 20 years later in our fourth job to-
gergether. With intelligence, instinct, vision
and leadership, as well as a solid knowledge of
the market we serve, he eschews bureaucracy
and allows his staff to get the job done.

Dan promptly gathered a couple of us un-
suspecting technical services librarians and
put us in a room with an extremely
talented programmer at the Biomedical li-
brary. Jim Fayollat. We were charged with
quickly expanding the small existing Bio-
medical system to a large in-house integrated
library system capable of supporting the work
of all of the libraries and collections at UCLA.
We sure learned a lot along the way, but Orion
was developed in short order (acq/serials first)
and lasted unbelievably until V2k and the
download of the mainframe computer spelled
despair. I challenge any of the current ILS
systems to match some of Orion’s capabili-
ties—just ask the staff at UCLA.

The development of Orion is a story in itself!
Considering the low standards was the easy
part; convincing the library staff to give it a
try was much harder! As part of this auto-
mation project, we had to design an 8 by 11
worksheet with all kinds of perforations for
3 x 5 slip cards: one for the bibliographers,
one for the catalogers, one as a temporary shelf
list card, etc., etc. It was actually a small price
for all we’ve learned to trust the system,
the slips gradually disappeared (the manual
shelving list took longer).

At Faxon in the mid-80s, I had the good
fortune to work with Ronnie Postlethwaite,
a talented colleague and friend to this day.
Our Faxon Linx SC-10 network of serials folk
was the best ever; remember the annual LINX
user meetings? — and did we enjoy Courier,
one of the first e-mail systems. Way ahead
of its time, it was hard to explain the concept
of e-mail to others outside of Faxon.

Another fond memory hails from my
days at Readmore. We noticed that
people were frustrated at not being able
to exchange unwanted serials issues on
Serialist and came up with the idea of
hosting a back issues listserver, but had not
the slightest idea how to go about it. But
I had an idea who would! So we called a
form colleague at MIT who had be-
come a bit of an Internet guru (gophers
at the time), Marilyn Geller, and that was
not only the start of the flourishing
Backserv and BackMed lists, but also of a
longstanding and very precious friendship!

Now I’m back full circle at Faxon/ RowCom and delighted to be reunited
with old friends, clients and colleagues—
among many others, Susan Kalalas, Joe
Sollitto, Georges Sarazin, Dan and Rich-
ard Rowe, energetic and creative as al-
ways! Beginning the new millennium, we
think we’re now very sophisticated and
that technology savvy, yet the whole indus-
try is struggling with e-journals and elec-
tronic resources. What will they be saying
about us in 20 years?

Robert Maxwell
from page 22

In the end, he sold - possibly had to sell -
Bergamon to raise funds to save his pub-
lishing and newspaper enterprises in the
United States. It was sold for £440 mil-
lion to Elsevier, the Dutch publishing com-
pany and now remains only as one of the
imprints within this company.

What went wrong? The press and other
experts have covered much newsprint on
the subject but, as I see it in very simplis-
tic terms, the seeds of his destruction lay
in his overambitious desire to establish the
largest global network the world has ever
seen. He never stopped to consolidate his
gains but spread his net too far, too wide,
and too quickly. Above all, he paid too
much for acquisitions, notably in the United
States, which, in themselves, were not profi-
table and at a time when interest rates were
escalating and the recession had taken hold.
His creditors closed in and it became in-
creasingly difficult or impossible to repay
loans on due date. His desperate efforts to
stem the tide opened the flood gates and
led him, deliberately, or accidentally, to his
g Products. He now rests on the Mount of Ol-
lives awaiting the Day of Judgement.