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Reminiscence at Retirement

Anne Robichaux

Medical University of South Carolina

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Reminiscence at Retirement
January 15, 2000

There was a young woman of five and twenty
Who was offered a job at SO Barre.
Twas at the end of a turbulent time,
Could the year have been 1969?

Mentored by Bird and Ebert both
Eager to put "med bib" to work
At least for two years, for so we were taught.
Less than two is all for naught.

Directing "Tech Processing" was the focus then:
Cataloging, filing, and classification.
Union catalog print needing 5X magnification.
Card production and filing revision.
Over and over ... ad infinitum.

In 1970 we made the move
To Library/Admin and never believed
We'd ever fill up such enormous space.
Not realizing we'd soon outgrow this place.

With the advent of MEDLINE in '72
We sampled the beginning of the equipment "zoo"
Access seemed limitless, there was no prediction
It was the icebergs' tip of electronic information.

The position became, in '75.
Associate Director, I felt I'd arrived
At some sort of pinnacle (or was I impaled?)
With management, budget, and more personnel...

Two years later we added a floor
To support education with AV's galore
The hardware and software of '77
Lingers today in our electronic haven.

In the mid '80s we went online
Removed that card catalog, celebrated big time
We lost space, then gained it, reused and remodeled
We shifted, we waxed, gave away and recycled.

More acronyms and abbreviations appeared
The linguistic nightmare we all had feared
An alphabet soup that became quite perplexing
Some were intelligible, others quite vexing.

NUC, NLM, MARC, and LC
CATLINE, SERLINE, MESH, OCLC.
SOLINET, SERMLP, OPAC, and MUSCLS.
LIS, BRS, CALC and CONBLS.
AHEC, SCHIN, SACS, JCAHO.
LCME, IPEDS, AASHLD, and ARCO???
Pixels and protocols. PCs and MACS,
Email and Snailmail. HTML. HVAC???

Yes the building is bursting in ways old and new,
Collections have grown, equipment has, too,
Somewhere, somehow, during continuous change,
Two years became 30 — it now seems so strange.
How quick it all happened, what a ride its been.
A wonderful journey, perhaps a whirlwind?

This career was my second, and the longest by far.
But the millennium beckons, I must follow that star.
So now is the time to bid all adieu
As Y2K arrives, new challenges do, too.
It's the folks I'll miss most, who shared all those miles.
For it's the company that makes the journey worthwhile.

— by Anne Kehler Robicheaux
Professor Emeritus, Medical University of S.C.

Standing at the public catalog drawers filing.
New staff had to "file above the rod" so their work could be reviewed.
A card misfiled was lost forever.
Dropping a drawer was a major catastrophe — it was an art to scoop up spilled cards in the right order.

— by Patricia Smith
(Colorado State University)
<psmith@manta.library.
ColoState.EDU>

started in Acquisitions in 1976.
Almost my entire job was typing orders on forms with five carbon copies, and filing.
With that number of copies, even if I had had a self-correcting typewriter, it would not have done any good.
Of course, all the repetitive information, like the vendor and purchase order number, had to be keyed in for every title ordered.
The big innovation was when we switched from carbon paper to NCR paper.

For pre order verification, we used Library of Congress proof slips, which gave the verifier sore feet.
Then we switched to the Blackwell title fiche, which gave the verifier motion sickness and a stiff neck.
When we finally got OCLC, we had one terminal for all of Tech Services, and no automated acquisitions system, so we still had to write down all the information and then give it to the typist to type.

We used a ten-key calculator to total up the amount encumbered in each order.
I remember that $8.95 was the most common price for a trade, hard-bound book; it seemed that I keyed it in constantly.
We had an annual sort of ceremony: the tossing of the oldest year's "orders received" file at the end of every fiscal year.

I shudder at the thought of having to function that way now:
no OPAC and Internet at my desk, no automated system with its built-in report writing and fund accounting.
But I sometimes wonder if, in our work life anyway, we have lost the ability to do it right the first time!

— by Jey Wann
(Oregon State Library)

When I started grad school for my MLS, I asked my husband for a new state of the art electric typewriter—that was 1988. I told him nobody is going to mess around with a silly computer but the business world!

— by Linda Rousseau
(LeMoyne-Owen College)

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