September 2001

People Profile: Peter McCracken, University of Washington

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Recommended Citation
DOI: https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.3606

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People Profile — Peter McCracken

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Peter McCracken
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Born:


Education:

BA, English, Oberlin College, Oberlin, OH
MSLS, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
MA, Maritime History, East Carolina University, Greenville, NC
Williams College-Mystic Seaport Program in American Maritime Studies, Mystic, CT

Summary of library work experiences:

Graduate Assistant, Sloane Art Library, UNC-CH, Sept ’93 to July ’95
Archives Intern, Maine Maritime Museum Library, Bath, Maine, May to Aug ’94
Reference Librarian, Joyner Library, East Carolina University, Jan ’97 to June ’99
Reference & Instructional Librarian and Coordinator of Reference Services, Odegaard Undergraduate Library, University of Washington, July ’99 to present

Other interests:

Maritime history. Six years ago I started a set of Webpages called “Maritime History on the Internet,” at http://ils.unc.edu/maritime/home.shtml. After that I started receiving a lot of questions about specific vessels, such as, “My great-grandfather came to America on the good ship Dolly. What can you tell me about it?” I knew nothing about the good ship Dolly, but I did have access to a wide collection of books that might know something. To my knowledge there was no central index of all of these books, so I created one, called an “Index to Ships in Books” at http://faculty.washington.edu/petermcc/shipindex.html. It tells people where they can find information about a specific vessel. It’s like a Biography & Genealogy Master Index for ships.

Last book read and literary tastes:

The combination of work in the library and work at Serials Solutions doesn’t give me a lot of time to read, which is frustrating to me. I did just read Salman Rushdie’s 1990 novel, Haroun and the Sea of Stories, which my brother Mike, who manages technology for Serials Solutions, and his girlfriend, gave me. That turned out to be quite appropriate; Rushdie’s story describes the “Egghheads of P2C2E House,” where they manage the P2C2E: the “Processes too Complicated to Explain.” It’s a good description of what happens in our database as we successfully track all of these database holdings!

My wife has also introduced me to the works of science fiction authors like Sheri Tepper and Connie Willis, which I have enjoyed a great deal.

In seven years, will you be a librarian or a vendor?

I think I’ll still be a librarian. I love working in the library, and I particularly enjoy working with students and working at the reference desk. I am interested in maritime librarianship, such as at a maritime museum, but there are only a few such positions in the U.S. The University of Washington is a great institution, and I’d love to strengthen its maritime offerings over the next few years.

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