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

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The Millennium Perspective

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The **M**illennium Issue 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 assistant, my job at **Boston University** was to file (and pull) **Richard Abel** approval slips in multiple sort orders for the bibliographers. That's a name out of the past!

The library school at **UCLA** was tremendous. Under the direction of **Robert Vosper**, with visits from professional luminaries such as **Seymour Lubetzky** and **Lawrence Powell**, we were especially fortunate to study cataloging with a wonderful but 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 associations 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 PL1—it only took a couple of hours to run!

My worst task at the **UCLA Research Library** 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 70's), 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 to permanent filing status.

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 programs or materials existed, so we did our own. Food and drink were expressly forbidden 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 catalog ala 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 University Librarian at **UCLA**, had the wisdom to hire **Dan Tonkery** 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 together. 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 unsuspecting technical services librarians and

put us in a room with an extremely talented programmer at the Biomedical library, **Jim Fayollat**. We were charged with quickly expanding the small existing Biomedical 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 Y2k and the downfall of the mainframe computer spelled its demise. I challenge any of the current ILS systems to match some of Orion's capabilities—just ask the staff at **UCLA**.

The development of Orion is a story in itself! Coming up with the specs was the easy part; convincing the library staff to give it a try was much harder! As part of this automation project, we had to design an 8 by 11 worksheet with all kinds of perforations for 3 x 5 slips: one for the bibliographers, one for the catalogers, one as a temporary shelflist card, etc., etc. It was actually a small price to pay and once we all got to trust the system, the slips gradually disappeared (the manual shelflist took longer).

At **Faxon** in the mid-80's, I had the good fortune to work with **Bonnie 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 Serialst and came up with the idea of hosting a back issues listserv, but had not the slightest idea how to go about it. But I had an idea who would! So we called a former colleague at **MIT** who had become 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/RoweCom** and delighted to be reunited with old friends, clients and colleagues—among many others, **Susan Kalalas**, **Joe Sollitto**, **Georges Sarazin**, **Dan** and **Richard Rowe**, energetic and creative as always! Beginning the new millenium, we think we're now very sophisticated and technologically savvy, yet the whole industry is struggling with e-journals and electronic 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 - Pergamon to raise funds to save his publishing and newspaper enterprises in the United States. It was sold for £440 million to Elsevier, the Dutch publishing company 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 simplistic 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 profitable and at a time when interest rates were escalating and the recession had taken hold. His creditors closed in and it became increasingly 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 grave. He now rests on the Mount of Olives awaiting the Day of Judgement. 🍇