

November 2013

People Profile: Peter McCracken, University of Washington

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Recommended Citation

Mays, Allison P. (2011) "People Profile: Peter McCracken, University of Washington," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 13: Iss. 4, Article 16.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.3606>

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of updating and other value-added services should librarians expect for the added costs of a subscription? What kind of specific assurances should librarians insist on relating to archiving and future access to past editions of online reference sources?

KAC: This is a major concern for many librarians. I think that we should expect some value-added services for the additional cost particularly better searching capability and more frequent updating. I don't know what we can expect as far as archiving and access to past editions. But they are definitely questions that librarians should be asking of vendors. I think all librarians should talk frequently to vendors telling them what they need. It is only with this constant conversation that we can encourage vendors to consider the need for archiving and future access to past editions as well as many other issues.

ATG: *Do large libraries like the New York Public Library still feel an archival mandate for libraries as it relates to reference works? What about archiving other materials?*

KAC: I work for the Branch Libraries of the **New York Public Library** which does not have an archiving mandate. But I know that the Research Libraries are concerned about this. Any library has to make some compromises if it really needs a particular electronic resource. But I think we have to keep asking for archiving.

ATG: *Any advice for librarians trying to negotiate consortium deals for online reference products like the Grove Dictionaries, the American National Biography, etc.?*

KAC: I think simultaneous use is a better way to go than paying by the number of users. I know that many vendors want to charge for the population served or the number of units the library has. This may work okay if the resource is heavily used but if this is not the case, the simultaneous use model will serve the library better. I also think that vendors should expect libraries to look at usage statistics and to expect price adjustments based on the use. Libraries need to be realistic and expect to pay more if the usage warrants it. Consortia can certainly keep costs down especially for electronic reference titles that may not receive heavy use.

ATG: *On a broader level, do companies like Questia and the various "Ask a..." services threaten to marginalize libraries and their reference collections? Will we be collectively outsourced?*

KAC: I really don't think so. I think that users will still need us. Many people are not skilled enough to get their information totally online and to work independently. Get-

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Profiles Encouraged

People Profile — Peter McCracken

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Peter McCracken

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Born:

1969 in Seattle, Washington.

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 Web pages 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 "Eggheads 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. 🐙