June 2003

People Profile: Michelle Flinchbaugh

Editor

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Recommended Citation
Editor (2003) 'People Profile: Michelle Flinchbaugh,' Against the Grain: Vol. 15: Iss. 3, Article 24. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.4123

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BORN & LIVED: I was born and raised in northwest Indiana (about 20 miles from downtown Chicago). I lived in Bloomington, Indiana, for five years while in and out of college. Later I lived for awhile in Williamsburg, Virginia, then Ann Arbor, Michigan, before settling in Baltimore, Maryland.

EARLY LIFE: I was a brat, hopelessly spoiled by parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles. During my pre-K years, I endlessly asked “Why,” and became infamous in my neighborhood for my absolutely incessant question-asking, along with the numerous plastic doll dresses I ruined making “mud-pies” with a little boy down the block. Later I read voraciously, played softball, hung out at the beach or the pool, and at the library, where the librarians knew me by name. I was “book-smart,” had grandiose dreams, and incredible wanderlust, while lacking in all common sense. I did not want to grow up and be a librarian, because my mother told me that’s what I should grow up and be.

FAMILY: I have a four-year-old son, and a husband who lives with his girlfriend. I have a large, close-knit extended family in the Chicago area that I don’t get to see nearly enough.


FIRST JOB: During my high school years, I did semi-volunteer work in a convalescent home feeding elderly people who couldn’t feed themselves. So I stopped wanting to be a doctor and started not knowing what I wanted to be. Sometimes that, the need for money led me to become a full-time fast-food worker. Finally I listened to my mother and decided to become a librarian.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: My first library position was as a graduate assistant working with Sivlic’s language access programs at Indiana University. My first Librarian position was working on a grant at the Center for Research Libraries cataloging foreign language newspapers. Later I cataloged historical newspapers on grant at the College of William and Mary, and was a Serials Cataloger at the University of Michigan. While working with serials, I was active in NASIG and served four years on its Electronic Communication Committee. Currently I’m the Acquisitions Librarian at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. I edit the “Biz of Acq” column in Against the Grain and serve on the University of Maryland and Affiliated Institution’s Serials/Aquisitions Small Working Group for the consortial implementation of the Ex Libris integrated library system.

IN MY SPARE TIME: I LIKE TO: Most of my time is used up with work; raising my son, and improving my 100-year old house by painting, dry walling, refinishing floors, etc. I dream a lot of what I will do when I have spare time again. I would like to spend more time with nature, more time listening to music, more time gardening, and maybe even someday doing volunteer work with children or the elderly. I also occasionally dream of finding and buying antique furniture in poor condition and refinishing it. I do occasionally find time to read and float in my pool. Playing with my 4 year old son is a lot of fun.

FAVORITE BOOKS: It’s Robert Heinlein’s Time Enough for Love, although I’m a bit reluctant to admit it publicly, given the amount of incest in it. It’s composed of several stories, and as a whole, the book is about things like the will to live, happiness, love, and social mores. While Science Fiction isn’t my favorite genre, in this case Heinlein uses science fiction to challenge how we think about ourselves, and in my mind, to question the interrelationship between logic and emotions and how society values them.

PET Peeves/What Makes Me Mad: Closed-mindedness. When people can only see one side of an issue. When people see everything as either black or white. When people can’t get out of the little programs running in their heads to see or understand something different or new. And the worst: When I do those things myself!

PHILOSOPHY: Figure out what works and do it. Feelings come, feeling go.

Most Meaningful Career Achievement: I’ve done all kinds of things I’m really proud of, but ultimately, I think it’s the times when I’ve been really good at motivating people that have been most meaningful, whether it’s “planting” an idea and just letting it grow, or recognizing a good quality, or really listening and building a consensus based on what I’ve heard, or even simply pushing for more or better work. Nothing meaningful I’ve done could have been done without the other people who worked on it or toward it.

GOAL: I HOPE TO ACHIEVE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW: I would like to be involved in creating a library portal that is as easy, as neutral, as useful, and as popular as Amazon.com, and I would like to make it integrated with campus information and classroom software so that users could seamlessly and easily use everything we have available for them. This is probably not a realistic goal, and it’s not really in my job description as an acquisitions librarian, but it’s what I’d really like to do. However, there is some small hope, so wish me luck. I figure if I dream big, maybe I’ll achieve big.

WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: Likely someone will invent an ebook that people want to buy and read. Some library vendors might find a way to compete with online consumer vendors like Amazon.com and Barnes & Noble.com in terms of stock and speed of delivery. Maybe a library vendor will partner with an online consumer book dealer, offering specialty library services using the online consumer book dealer’s Website and stock of books, giving libraries the best of both worlds. Journals may start to be cut out of the information chain as they become increasingly irrelevant as the package which articles come in. Someone in the industry will likely suffer a catastrophic loss of data due to a hacker or a virus. Oh, and we’ll all replace all of our CD’s and DVD’s with the next thing that comes along.

Downloaded in large batches with minimal manual intervention. Invoices are processed more quickly with EDI than if they had to be keyed in, even with the item-by-item linking of line items with bibliographic records that is necessary in DRA.

Cooperating to make the EDI process workable and putting the process into practice has created a closed link between YBP and the library. Creating customer loyalty of that kind would surely help to make EDI attractive to any vendor.

Testing EDI Purchase Orders
At Jackson Library, using EDI with the YBP approval plan but not with firm orders or with serials means that the library is making only partial use of the EDI software it purchased.

After a software rewrite in 2001 that allowed use of multiple funds, Jackson Library began another series of tests with the goal of using EDI with firm orders for monographs. Again, the library first needed to clarify with the vendor, YBP, which accounts would be used for which kinds of EDI orders. It was found that only one account could be set up at a time in the DRA supplier records. Due to information missing from the supplier record, the initial transmissions failed.

The steps necessary to placing an EDI purchase order are as follows:

1. Create a regular purchase order in DRA
2. Match points are the ISBN numbers, vendor ID and library ID (SAN)
3. When ready to place the order, select the EDI option from the “PO Place & Print” screen

An automated FTP process translates the flat file to a purchase order file, runs the FTP commands, verifies the file transfer, and updates the purchase order screen. This process, for some reason, is fully automated while “pulling” an EDI invoice is not.

Results of Purchase Order Testing
The library carried out EDI tests with a handful of firm orders. All of the funds added to the DRA Acquisitions Policy file worked and allowed various funds on one purchase order. Matching occurred on the ISBNs. Transmission was instantaneous to the vendor, and the order status was quickly updated and accurate in DRA. No manual linking of invoice line items to bibliographic records was necessary, and this seemed to promise that EDI would be an even greater timesaver than firm orders than it is with approval shipments.

Unfortunately, there was a show-stopper. The library staff who create purchase orders and place orders often need to add notes to the purchase orders. They create such notes as these:

Notify requester when book arrives
Notify Reference when book arrives
Hold book for requester
Prepay (a note added in the PO header screen)
Rush order
Rush invoice (refers to payments made to small booksellers)
one copy to Reference/one copy to Stacks (when more than one copy of a title is ordered)
Bill Special Collections
Ship to Special Collections

Without these notes for firm orders, books would not continue on page 82