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# Drinking from the Firehose -- The More Things Change, the More They Stay the Same

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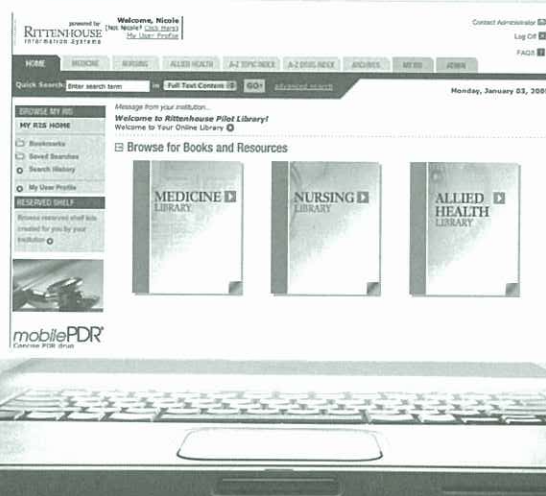
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## Drinking from the Firehose — The More Things Change, the More They Stay the Same

by **Eleanor I. Cook** (Serials Coordinator & Professor, Appalachian State University, Boone, NC) <[cookei@appstate.edu](mailto:cookei@appstate.edu)>

I originally thought this column would be about my continuing woes with the handling of e-journals and/or would connect somehow to the tragedy of that “other woman” whose name sounds like **Kafina**. (Whether or not **ALA** will have its summer conference in New Orleans in 2006 I don’t know, but perhaps we’ll hear something by the time you read this.)

Change has become a word that means nothing anymore, because we hear it so often. With every other breath these days, in fact.

This has been an amazing year of change for me. The major change is the new library building in which I am now working. After years of dreaming of, talking about and planning for a new library building, **Appalachian State University** actually has a new library. In 2000, the citizens of North Carolina passed a bond referendum that infused the state’s university system with money for building projects and the **Carol Grotnes Belk Library and Information Commons** was conceived. Its birth, after a gestation of several years, occurred this

spring. The labor and delivery was hard and complex, but successful. The good news: beautiful, flexible and useful space, room for growth, and the challenge of providing popular new services. The not so great news: constant tweaking the leftovers on the punch list — for example, convincing engineers and contractors that Special Collections really needs separate HVAC systems that actually work, that back-of-house spaces like Technical Services really do need secure doors that lock; and that public services staff who work in the new building really do need training on how to operate and maintain the myriad of new security and support systems that make the building operational. It will all get done in time.

I have a beautiful new office, with new furniture. I have 20 boxes of “stuff” yet unpacked, and considering I threw away at least that much prior to moving, I am confident I can probably get rid of half again more when I find the time to haul the boxes out of storage.

It was amazing that my coworkers and I were able to stop almost all meaningful work for close to a month during the actual move, and then resume it in a strange but lovely new place, and the world did not come to an end. Students and faculty were inconvenienced

to be sure during that period in May and June when they could not check out books or study in the library, but since it was a slow time of the year, they survived it and so did we.

The move went incredibly well. Most of the headaches involved change, of course. Especially the last minute kind, but then, we discovered that almost everything we thought we “knew” and everything we thought we “planned,” changed. Then it changed again. And after awhile, nothing surprised us.

Of course, one of the reasons that moving the physical library was not that much of an inconvenience was that so many of our resources are now online. The library Website, the online catalog and the databases and other resources did not stop working at all, or hardly at all, and certainly no more than they ever did before the move or since. The IT cutter probably went better than anything, although there were moments of concern and a few sleepless nights for those involved.

But now that we are settled in our new digs, I haven’t stopped thinking about change. Now we have other issues with which to grapple. The new building challenges us everyday to remember that we envisioned the future when we planned this building and now that future is here.

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# Leaving the Books Behind! — A New Adventure in Serial Land!



Column Editor: **Mary E. (Tinker) Massey** (Serials Librarian, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University) <Mary.Massey@erau.edu>

## “Where am I? What am I doing?”

After graduation, I asked the mirror on the wall if I was any smarter for the degree. The answer continues to be “No.” I am still the same person with the same ethics, perhaps a little more knowledge, and much more confidence (as **Heidi** says), but still me. How is it that I am in another land? Once I attained being vested at **USC** and turned the golden age of sixty, I plodded into the world of applications. I don’t believe I ever expected anyone to take me seriously (that I really wanted a professional job). I’m not sure I believed it myself, but there I was listening to my mother saying it was time to come home (like I was six years old again). She’s right. After all, she is eighty and has suffered through my life too and now that I have finally gotten that degree, she needs me near to listen for her needs. We all meet this one way or another and now is the time to pursue adventures closer to home. I don’t really mind because I need the assurance of home as well and the knowledge that I can be near if I am needed. I have always remembered “you can’t go home again.” In some ways that is true — nothing is ever the same again, but you can physically reside there or near by and take in the sights, sounds and smells of older years. Just remember that it can never be the same. It’s not like a time warp where you can step in and out of the real and unreal worlds. It is all real and very much NOW! Well, I did send out applications, being careful to apply for those jobs that were interesting, near home and within my capabilities. Since I acquired thirty years of job experi-

ence first and then got the degree, I was looking for my last hurrah and not the first. Some answered that they had received my application and would consider it. Others sent special letters about how wonderful my resume was and how sorry they were to tell me they had already hired someone. They were sure I would be snatched up very quickly. I had to pause and consider that I had chosen to send the full eight page resume with the confidence that the cover letter specified my long years of experience, my excitement about working and my ability to enhance any job they could offer me. I had an email — very direct and in query about the possibility of considering another job at **ERAU** that had not been posted yet. Would I read the ad? Would I? Yes, I did and found that I had the qualifications. I replied that I would like to apply for this one too. What was the procedure? The Technical Services Librarian interviewed me on the phone the next day and I was asked to wait until references could be contacted. They were queried and I went to Daytona for the interview. Arriving early, I began investigating the library, said hello to a number of people and watched the interactions of the staff to get a feel for the work environment. Needless to say, I found the place comfortable, the people delightful, and the questions answerable. The day turned into a wonderful visit and I was offered the job. Yes seemed too small a word to convey my excitement. I still have trouble understanding that I left nearly everything behind to live in a camper trailer and begin a new life. I

share my 8 x 15 existence with my eighteen year old blind cat and I am thankful that I have only stepped on her once since we arrived. I have decided to take the first two weeks getting more acclimated (well, the heat and humidity are somewhat familiar) to the left-behind culture of my youth. I am trying to catch up on about twenty years of few sleep hours, juggling two and three jobs with school, church and family needs, and the stresses of not knowing who and where I am. I brought Tigger and Pooh and a stuffed Christmas bear that shared my bedroom in Columbia, my family and friend pictures, a large note pad and envelopes. Seems I have lost my disks with my articles and stories and research, so reconstructing will be tough. But, I am here! I am a serials librarian at last.

When I first began trying to get the **MLIS** at **FSU**, it was the eighties and all I could dream about was becoming a serials cataloger. I married again (for the last time) and in a year, my husband required all of my care-giving nature and time to survive. We battled that for ten years until his death and then I took care of friends and eventually had a small stroke (TIA). I rehab-ed myself, having been trained to do so in undergraduate work, and began again. It was difficult to go back to school when making sense of written words was still a problem, but the School at **USC** had confidence in my abilities to cope. I regenerated my writing in order to learn more quickly, and in hopes that the mental exercise would be a stimulus to my tired confused brain. The stubbornness that is a common trait in our family came to the fore and I survived, with a few kicks from friends and family. Sometimes I feel I really don’t know where I am and other times I come out slugging.

I am thankful for the chance to share my knowledge and skills with others. I am also thankful that the TS Librarian is such a good mentor and patient with me as I learn so many new skills. I will do some collection management, acquiring of serials through vendors, learn **Voyager**, catalog serials and when I am further trained, I will work some hours (four) on the Reference desk next term. This term, I will take the beginning Aeronautical Sciences course to give me background in the vocabulary, theories and excitement of the profession of Aeronautical and Aerospace Sciences. Introspectively, I need them as much as they need me and I am beginning to find out what I will be doing. I will go where some have gone before, but I will make it my path, my courage and my strength designing perhaps a newer alternative. The lessons we learn in school should be applied to our new positions and enhance our abilities to guide and strengthen our profession through the many future changes and crises. If all the graduates follow that dictum, we should be able to weather even the toughest problems in the field. See you in Charleston! 🍷

## Drinking From the Firehose from page 75

So in my little realm of the library we are faced with:

- Completing the transition to a new interface of our online system (it was always in the plan but it is finally happening)
- Reviewing vendors, work flows and staffing
- Reprioritizing the importance of certain tasks
- Struggling with the onslaught of more and more e-journals and their attendant complexities
- Considering services we never dreamed of in the past

Another change in my life occurred this year when I celebrated the passing of my 50th birthday. I am half a century old. As I reflect on this, I realize that the more things change, the more they stay the same. In other words, the older you get, the less change surprises you.

With that in mind, I cannot help but make comment on the recent death of a beloved col-

league who knew this better than anyone. **Lyman Newlin** passed from our world in September, and what a marvelous repertoire of memories and experiences he shared with us during his lifetime. The span of his career was vast and deep. I know that the **25th Charleston Conference** will celebrate **Lyman**, and we will miss him terribly. Who will ring the bell for us to come back to the main room after the break? Who will we watch for not to run us over in his motorized cart, while waving his cane? **Papa Lyman** was such a part of the fabric of our professional lives. This is truly a turning point in history, not having **Lyman** with us at conferences and in the pages of *Against the Grain* and elsewhere and everywhere. He would occasionally call me out of the blue, asking for an interpretation of some esoteric thing he read somewhere; on some point he assumed I might be knowledgeable. Sometimes I had no idea what he was talking about; sometimes I was able to help him understand the thing he found puzzling. Hearing from him was always a delight, and always, it made me feel special. If my life turns out to be half as rich as that of **Lyman Newlin**’s, I will be truly blessed. 🍷