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I Hear the Train A Comin' — Remembering Lee Dirks

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The scholarly communication community lost a giant this September when **Lee Dirks** and his wife were killed in a car accident in Peru. Lee and **Judy** were celebrating their fifteenth anniversary when tragedy struck. Their deaths are devastating on so many levels. While I could spend pages and pages talking about Lee's incredible professional accomplishments, I want to touch on these only briefly. Lee attended **Trinity University** and earned a Masters in Information and Library Sciences at the **University of North Carolina**. Lee started as **Microsoft's** first archivist and later moved to **Microsoft Research**, where he was a Director of Portfolio Strategy. In this position, he established key relationships for the company with universities and research institutions. Lee was also involved in education and development issues, serving on the boards of the **University of Washington's** Libraries' Council of Advocates and the Washington Preservation Initiative. He made a professional impact that is profound and long-lasting. His passion to make information more accessible in all senses of the word helped propel numerous initiatives forward. Lee travelled everywhere and appeared at so many panels, presentations, and workshops. In that sense, many of you reading this probably knew him, or felt like you did. One of his greatest professional qualities was an utter lack of artifice. He was the man you saw up there on stage — smart, passionate, innovative, and personable.

Lee mattered in our industry, but this is but a grain of sand compared to his worth as a person. He made friends so easily, which is a great skill, but he kept friends easily, too, which is more difficult. In the days that followed the accident, Lee's Facebook page became an amazing patchwork of remembrances and shared grief. So very many people counted Lee as a true kindred spirit. They came from all over the world. Some had known him for decades, others just a short while. What emerged in reading the dozens of tributes was that Lee at 15 or 30 or 45, that Lee in Louisiana or Texas, or Seattle, was fundamentally the same Lee — funny, adventurous, giving, quick with a laugh, engaged, and decent.

I had the privilege of working with Lee for the past five years. More importantly, I had the pleasure of calling him a friend. We travelled around the country together on various **Microsoft** projects, with very long days of meetings topped off by great dinners, a pint or two of local lager, and wonderful conversation. These talks jumped from sports to music to politics, all subjects on which Lee was well-versed. Most of all, though, Lee loved to talk about his family. His two young

daughters, **Esme** and **Lila**, hung his moon. We all love our kids, of course, but Lee *loved* them. Those who knew Lee feel an open wound in thinking about the loss of a father's kind smile, a mother's gentle kiss, and a family's warm embrace.

The night after I heard this terrible news, I had a dream. I walked into my local pub and Lee was there. He greeted me with his three hallmarks — a smile, a raise of the glass, and a "Dude!" I cannot express how

nice it felt to wrap myself in that slumber and feel his presence just a few minutes longer. Lee made a difference in my life. He was a true friend, and I will miss him. 🍷

Esme and Lila Dirks Memorial Support Fund: The family has set up a fund to help **Esme and Lila** with their future costs. The fund will be used for their education costs or other unforeseen emergencies in their lives. If you would like to help with a donation, please send a check made out to "**Esme and Lila Dirks Memorial Support Fund**" to: **Andy Carothers, 4562 Purdue Ave NE, Seattle WA 98105.**