Back Talk—Reminiscences and Looking Forward

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inginning in the 1970’s, the effects of information technology upon the
operation of libraries became very pronounced. Catalog cards up to that point
in time had been produced using small printing machines which could put out card sets
that had to be filed by hand. Since this filing work was very tedious and time consuming, I
remember all librarians — irrespective of their other skills — had to help catch up with the
backlog of filing at all the libraries I worked in the early 1970’s. The rules for filing author,
title, and subject cards were arcane and really only understood by cataloging department
staff. But they had to allow others to help. We would file the cards but would not pull
the rods which passed through holes in the bottom of each card to keep them from being
stolen for use as scratch paper. Instead our cataloging department colleagues would first
check our work, fixing our mistakes, and then pull the rods out allowing our cards to drop
down into place.

But with the 1970’s, all of this cataloging information began to be input into the com-
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