Editorial Board Thoughts:

Appreciation for History

Cynthia Porter

The future looks exciting for *ITAL*, with our new open access and online only journal. As I look forward, I have been thinking about librarians and the changes I have witnessed in library technology. I would like to thank Judith Carter for her work on *ITAL* for over 13 years. She encouraged me to volunteer for the editorial board. I will miss her.

I believe that lessons from the past can help us. *ITAL*'s first issue appeared in 1982—the same year that I graduated from high school. I typed all my school papers with a typewriter except for my last couple of papers in college. My father bought an early Macintosh computer (called Lisa). He had a daisy wheel printer—if we wanted to change fonts, we changed out the daisy wheel. I am thankful for the editing capabilities and font choices I have now when I create documents.

As an undergraduate student, I worked on dedicated OCLC terminals in the Interlibrary Loan (ILL) department at my college library. I was hired because I had the two hours open when ILL usually used mail. I thought our ILL service was a big help for our students. I could not imagine then that electronic copies of articles could be delivered to ILL customers within one day. Today's ILL staff doesn't have to worry about paper cuts now, either.

I graduated from library school in 1989. When I first started working as a cataloger, we were able to access OCLC on PC's (an improvement from the dumb terminals) in the libraries. Our subject heading lists were in the big red books from the Library of Congress. I tried to use the red books as an example for today's students and they had no idea what I was talking about. Even though "subject headings" are a foreign concept to many students today, I will always value them and fight for their continuation.

I worked on several retrospective conversion projects when I worked for a library contractor until 1991. The libraries still had card catalogs and we converted these physical catalogs to online catalogs. Nicholson Baker's article "Discards[1]," published in 1994, fondly remembered card catalogs. This article was discussed fervently in library school, but it seems quaint now. I grew up with card catalogs and I liked being able to browse through the subject listings. Browsing online does not provide the same satisfaction, but I would never give up the ability to keyword search an electronic document. I liked browsing the classification schemes, too. I did like easily seeing where your chosen number appeared within the scheme. It's harder to do the same thing online.

In 1991 I worked at an academic library where we were still converting catalog cards. We all had

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computers on our desks by then and we were comfortable with regular use of e-mail. The Internet was still young and Gophers were the new technology. Even though Gophers were text-based, I thought it was amazing how easy it was to access information from a university on the other side of the country. The Internet was the biggest technology development for me. I currently work with distance students who rely on their Internet connections to use our online library. I could not imagine even having distance students if we weren't connected with computers as we are now.

A 2009 issue of *ITAL* was dedicated to discovery tools. In Judith Carter's introduction to the issue she cites the browsing theory of Shan-Ju Lin Chang. Browsing is an old practice in libraries and I am very happy to see that discovery tools use this classic library practice. Bringing like items together has been a helpful organization method for ages.

When I studied S.R. Ranganathan and his Colon Classification scheme, I realized that faceted classification would work very well on the web. I found his ideas to be fascinating, but difficult to implement on book labels for classification numbers. Some discovery tools even identify "facets" in searching and limiting. Ranganathan's work is a beautiful example of an old idea blossoming years after its conception. Classification, facets, and browsing are old ideas that are still helping us organize information in our libraries. We can't see the heavily used subjects by how dirty the cards are, but getting exact statistics on search terms is more useful anyway.

I would also like to thank Marc Truitt for his time and contributions to *ITAL.* Marc recently finished serving for four years as *ITAL* editor. He helped me remember library technology. I wanted to know about his collaboration with Judith Carter. He said that he "thought no one this side of Pluto could do as well as she" as Managing Editor.

We are lucky to have had brave librarians like Ranganathan, Carter, and Truitt. Although I enjoy remembering the past, I am very happy to utilize modern technology in my library. I don't want to live in the past, but I definitely don't want to forget it either. Thank you library technology pioneers.

REFERENCES

1. Nicholson Baker, "Discards," *The New Yorker,* April 4, 1994, vol. 70, no. 7, p. 64-85.