

**Remarks by Tom Nisonger, 2008 Chi Chapter Service Award Recipient
Beta Phi Mu Chi Chapter Annual Awards and Initiation Ceremony
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Indiana State Library, Indianapolis, Indiana**

First of all, thank you all for coming this morning. Let me explain about this jacket I'm wearing. As some of you may know, my students used to call this my Bobby Knight jacket because years ago Bobby Knight wore a plaid jacket similar to this. I assure you I'm not consciously trying to imitate Bobby Knight, so you don't have to worry about me throwing a chair or smashing a flower pot against the wall. I wore this for one class each semester when I told my Bobby Knight jokes and stories. I'm not going to tell them this morning, because I only told them when tuition was paid for one of my courses. Bobby Knight is gone, but my Bobby Knight jacket lives on.

I'd like to say Thank You. Thank you so much—I'm thrilled and am deeply appreciative of the Chi Chapter Service award. I feel very humble compared to many of the illustrious previous recipients, including Herbert White; David Kaser; Mary Krutulis, who is here this morning and who did an excellent job working with Beta Phi Mu when she was at SLIS; Mary Popp, who is also here this morning and is doing an excellent job as the current Chi Chapter Membership Coordinator; my former faculty mentors in SLIS, Steve Harter and Judy Serebnick; as well as many others I could name. There are other people here this morning that are just as deserving of the Award as I am, if not more so. I noticed that in 1988 Bobby Knight received the Award, so now I have 2 things in common with Bobby Knight—we both have Bobby Knight Jackets and we have both received the Chi Chapter Service Award.

This morning I will briefly talk about my interest and career in libraries and try to highlight some of the changes I have seen in libraries over the past half century.

I first became interested in libraries in the mid-1950s when I was around 11 or 12. In fact, I still vividly remember the very first book I ever checked out of a library—it was Roger Tory Peterson's *Field Guide to the Birds* from the public library in Boardman, Ohio. I lost the book and had to pay a \$5 replacement fee. Nevertheless, from that point on I was an avid user of libraries. I might add that I later found the book and because I had paid the replacement fee, got to keep the it, and I still have that book.

While completing my Ph.D. degree at Columbia University in political science, it was necessary to track down information resources for my dissertation from libraries all over the world. That was when I realized that library-type work was really challenging, fascinating and fun and decided to become a professional librarian. It was during my years at Columbia that I met my wife Claire, who is here this morning. We met at the Empire State Building, but I was an hour late because I left my wallet in a library. She says it was a portend of things to come. Claire teaches in the I.U. Biology Dept. She told me that many years ago a group of Biology Department faculty were sitting around talking about how much time you spend in the library when you are doing your dissertation and she commented that when her husband was doing his dissertation he spent so much time in the library that he turned into a librarian. I should mention that my dissertation was about Stalin's purge of the Leningrad party organization in 1926. People often wonder how much you use in real life the topic of your Ph. D. dissertation.

Fortunately, my dissertation topic—how one purges your political opponents—is something I never used during my career.

After completing my MLS degree at the University of Pittsburgh, I began my professional library career as a cataloger at the University of Manitoba library. My first day was November 18, 1974. On November 18, 1999, I announced in class that it was the 25th anniversary of the beginning of my career in librarianship and one of the students told me that it was her 25th birthday. I remember vividly walking into the University of Manitoba library on November 18, 1974 for the first day of my first professional position, but never did I imagine that very day somewhere in the world a baby was being born that exactly 25 years later would be in my collection development class at Indiana University.

At that time in the mid-1970s the University of Manitoba Library did not have electronic resources, the acquisitions function was hardly automated, and there was still a 3 by 5 inch public card catalog. There was a legendary story in the cataloging department (actually a morbid story but somewhat humorous) about a former employee whose biggest thrill in life was filling in the death dates in the card catalog for authors who had recently died. After a couple of years as a cataloger, I became the bibliographer for the social sciences and history at the University of Manitoba Library and thus began my lifelong interest in collection development.

My next professional job was at the University of Texas at Dallas, I began as the Collection Development coordinator and Acquisitions Department Head. At that time the library's biggest collection development challenge regarding electronic resources concerned whether we should buy machine readable data files for the Business School. We were among the first three libraries in North America to use LIBRIS, a stand-alone automated acquisitions system marketed by Baker & Taylor, which automated all basic acquisitions functions. When I began at Texas the library had what was called a Com catalog. COM stood for Catalog on Microformat. It was a catalog on microfiche or microfilm and was transitional between the card catalog and the OPAC we now know. I remember from that time period in the early 1980s a library that had a publicity campaign to introduce a new COM used the catchy slogan "I Never met a Com I didn't like." When I left Texas the library was implementing the NOTIS integrated library system that included an OPAC and an acquisitions module.

In the late summer of 1988 Claire and I left Texas and moved to Indiana where I began my teaching career at SLIS and she began hers in the Biology Department. Incidentally, that was the year I received my first e-mail and sent my first e-mail. Every job I had in my career, moving from Pittsburgh to Manitoba, from Manitoba to Texas, and from Texas to Indiana required Claire and I to move almost 1,000 miles. I hate to reflect on the true meaning of that fact: that my reputation is so bad I have to go about a 1,000 miles to escape it.

Let me briefly share with you a few observations regarding changes that have taken place during my career. Librarians are constantly dealing with new information formats. When I began working in libraries, they only collected, to any appreciable extent, print books, print serials, audio-visual items, and microfilm or fiche. In the 1980s libraries began collecting machine readable datafiles, off-the-shelf software, and CD-ROMs. During the 1990s Web resources, electronic journals, full-text databases and electronic books, emerged. I once read an article about a librarian who decided he had to take electronic books seriously when his 80-year old grandmother started sending him

newspaper clippings about electronic books. I decided I had to take electronic books seriously when I realized I was the author of two electronic books. I had no idea that when I signed my first two book contracts with Libraries Unlimited that they would license netLibrary the right to publish the print books as electronic books.

More recently, blogs, wikis, and Second Life have arrived on the scene. Who knows what will be next? Yet in most cases, the older formats have not gone away, but continue to exist alongside the newer ones, creating challenges for librarians.

Another change concerns how one defines the collection. The collection traditionally was defined as what was owned and housed within the four walls of the brick-and-mortar library. Now it includes electronic resources licensed by the library, and some argue that anything freely accessible on the Web might be considered part of the collection.

The librarian's job is much more complex than it used to be. A few decades ago, a collection development librarian faced a simple either-or binary decision regarding a journal or magazine: to subscribe to it or not to subscribe. Now there are at least 5 options: a print subscription only; an electronic subscription only; both a print and an electronic subscription; no subscription, but relying on ILL; or licensing a full-text electronic database containing the title. The fact that the same journal may be in multiple full-text databases and that open-access backruns may be freely available on the Web makes the decision even more complicated.

As I used to tell my students, these changes and greater complexity make being a librarian more exciting, more challenging, and more fun. I also told my students you should have fun being a librarian because you are not going to become rich being a librarian. I originally said that in a presentation I gave on electronic journals at an IFLA meeting in Istanbul, Turkey in 1995 and someone from Sweden quoted me on the Internet. So I've had my brief 15 minutes of fame on the Internet. More seriously, I always tried to convey to my students that being a librarian can be quite self-fulfilling and rewarding.

There have been fundamental changes in library and information science education in terms of curriculum, faculty, students, the name of the field, and numerous other factors. I particularly noticed changes in students during my 20 years of teaching. For one thing, they became younger every year, or was that the other way around? When I began teaching almost no student had even heard of the Internet, by the time I retired many students had truly outstanding technological skills.

One could mention numerous other changes regarding libraries, the profession, and LIS education if time allowed.

Unlike when I first became interested in libraries, many people now question the relevance of libraries or even their future existence. What will the future bring for libraries and our profession? I have to give an honest answer, which is: I don't know. But, I don't think that anyone really knows.

Some insight into this issue is provided by Clifford Lynch, the well-known Internet guru. In discussing how the Web is impacting and will impact libraries, Lynch has made a distinction between what he terms "Modernization" and "Transformation." He defines Modernization as doing the same things libraries have always done, but doing them better, more efficiently, and more cost effectively. On the other hand, Transformation means a fundamental sea change in the way libraries operate. There is no

question that libraries are being modernized by the Web as it is used to assist the performance of practically every basic library function. Examples of transformation include 24-7 service or the fact one doesn't have to be in a library to use its resources, but the ultimate outcome in the transformation of libraries is unknown.

Let me elaborate on the concept of a quote unquote "ultimate outcome." Perhaps there will be a continuous process of change for an indefinite time period without a stable end stage. When speculating on future scenarios, I think one should stipulate a specific time frame, such as 2 years, 5 years, 10 years, whatever. To cite a personal example of using a time frame, a few years ago someone said to me "you like books so much what are you going to do when libraries don't collect books anymore" and I responded "I'll be retired"--- that's one time frame I know for sure.

As a final thought, I used to tell my students at the end of the course, that this is an exciting time to be a librarian and it is obvious that technology will become even more important in the future. But it is their challenge as the future generation of librarians to utilize technology creatively and effectively; to make sure technology works for librarians and librarians don't work for technology; and to uphold the core values of librarianship. I hope they are successful at meeting that challenge.

Again, thank you very much. I deeply appreciate this award. Thank you for coming this morning.