
Brief Communication

Some personal recollections on the occasion of receiving the Kaula Award for 2000

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I have been asked to make some personal comments relevant to this occasion and in the tradition established by my fifty-year friend Nasser Sharify. Nasser was kind enough to nominate me for the Professor Kaula Award.

I first met Nasser when we were graduate students at the Columbia University School of Library Service in July, 1953. I think we met during the summer session. I had not yet registered for full-time matriculation in the Master's Degree program for the simple reason that I didn't have the money to pay the full tuition. However, while at the summer session, Dean Carl White announced the new Grolier Society fellowship established by the publishers of the *Encyclopedia*

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Americana [1]. The fellowship stipend was \$1000, which was a lot of money in those days.

The fellowship application form asked for three personal references. Having just completed two years as a researcher at the Welch Medical Library Indexing Project of the Johns Hopkins University, I had become well acquainted with many of the leading names in library science and documentation. So I listed the names of Frank Bradway Rogers [2], Director of the National Library of Medicine, Verner W. Clapp [3], Chief Assistant Librarian of Congress and later President of the Council on Library Resources, and Ralph Shaw [4], Director of the National Agricultural Library.

I gave Ralph's name with some trepidation. He attended the 'First Symposium on Machine Documentation in Science' which I had organized and conducted at the Welch Library [5]. The three dollar registration fee included a sumptuous buffet luncheon laid out by the Chef of the Johns Hopkins Hospital. A few days after the meeting was concluded, I received a cryptic note from Dr Shaw which stated 'Garfield, as a documentalist you make a great caterer!'

A decade or so later, Ralph Shaw would enter my personal life again. When my son Stefan was wounded in Vietnam he was transferred to a hospital in Hawaii. Ralph had become director of libraries at the University of Hawaii. Owing to my own illness at the time, I asked Ralph to visit Stefan which he did immediately. In his inimitable, commanding fashion, he spoke

directly to the medical staff to make certain that Stefan received the best of care.

I can only suppose that when Dean Carl White saw my list of references he did not hesitate to recommend me for the Grolier Society Bibliographic Fellowship, especially as they had expressed an interest in machine methods to modernize the methods of compiling the indexes to the *Encyclopedia Americana*. About six months after I was chosen, I received an invitation to visit *Encyclopedia Americana* and subsequently consulted with them on the possible use of punched-card methods. I did design a system for them but it would have required too many changes in the way they compiled and up-dated the indexes. In 1954, the typesetting capabilities of IBM machines were just too limited. Nevertheless, I found that working with the *Encyclopedia Americana* staff heightened my long-time interest in encyclopaedism and probably contributed to my proposal for a Librarian's Encyclopaedia which I discussed in a term paper. This reference encyclopaedia would be based on lists of the most-frequently asked questions provided by volunteer reference librarians. Once the FAQs had been classified, assembled and indexed, we would turn them over to a subject specialist who would make sure that the questions were answered within the text of the appropriate essay.

That idea lay dormant until about three years ago, when I was approached by Brett Butler, one of the founders of the *Magazine Index* and other ventures. Brett had set up a new company called *AnswerBase* which was to become effectively the modern fulfillment of the Librarian's Encyclopaedia. Cooperation between reference librarians would be facilitated via the World Wide Web. Unfortunately, about one year after the project began, Brett died suddenly and the project had to be abandoned.

Let us return to Columbia University again. Nasser Sharify and I remained chums all during the school year 1953 to June 1954. Nasser was a humanist at heart. Every day he wrote poems for his daughter back in Iran. Yet he was also open minded enough to attend the meetings of the Documentation Club which had been formed mainly with foreign students interested in the Colon Classification, patent searching, and other topics not covered by the standard curriculum. Professor Kaula will be pleased to learn that the first lecture was presented by an Indian student named Das Gupta on the subject of Ranganathan's Colon Classification [6]. The lecture on patent searching was presented by Robert Krupp, who became the science librarian at the New York Public Library.

After we graduated, we lost contact for many years, although I was somewhat aware of Nasser's activities in international librarianship and also as dean at the Pratt Institute. Several years ago I was invited to present the Ninth Annual Nasser Sharify Lecture at Pratt [7].

While the fellowship money was critical in helping to pay my tuition at Columbia, I had to supplement my income with various part-time jobs. One job involved cataloging the 4000 used and rare medical and scientific books at the Old Hickory Bookshop in New York City, which was owned by Murray and Jo Gottlieb. They were friends of Samuel Lazerow [8] of NLM who introduced me to them as a 'hard worker'. I recently spoke to Jo. She is still operating the Old Hickory Bookshop herself just outside of Washington, DC. Many years ago the Murray Gottlieb Prize was established by Jo and Ralph Grimes at the Medical Library Association to honour his memory (www.mla-net.org/awards/honors/gottlieb.html).

I mentioned that descriptor 'hard worker' for a good reason. After I was interviewed for employment at the Welch Library, Sanford Larkey had obtained a reference letter from my former boss, Professor Louis P. Hammett. In his letter he had said that 'Garfield is not a very imaginative chemist but a very hard worker.' That was just what San wanted – but he got a horse of a different colour. I guess that Professor Hammett's standards were different too. He never knew that I had compiled an index to the thousands of chemical compounds sitting around unused in the closet of the chemistry laboratories in Havermeyer Hall at Columbia. From this almost endless supply, which had been prepared by previous graduate students, I was able to make dozens of compounds needed for our experiments in acid-based catalysis [9]. On one fateful occasion, I tried to make a picric acid derivative and almost blew up the laboratory. That was when Hammett advised me to look for some other line of work.

So I went to the meeting of the 1951 American Chemical Society in New York City to be interviewed by the Director of Research at the Ethyl Corporation. He was looking for a chemical secretary. Since I had studied shorthand, this seemed like a wonderful opportunity to combine that skill with my chemical training. However, after the interview, I accidentally stopped in to a session of the ACS Division of Chemical Literature and learned that people actually got paid for work I had done gratis. So I asked the Chair, James W. Perry, then at MIT, "How does one find a job in this 'racket'?" His book *Punched Cards* [10] was published that year. He said he might have a

job for me at MIT, but weeks later, shortly after he had eaten my mother's home cooking, he informed me that the MIT project was off but that there was another job available in Baltimore. A few weeks later, I met Sanford Larkey and by March 1951, I was working at the Indexing Project. The next two years, as I have often said, is when I had most of the basic ideas which have dominated my career, including *Current Contents* and the *Science Citation Index*. Again, my chemistry served me well as I immediately began an examination of the chemical terms used in the NLM *Medical Subject Heading Authority List*, which is widely known as MESH. During my tenure at Welch, I also became a volunteer abstractor for *Chemical Abstracts*.

When I finished library school in 1954, I did not have the slightest idea that I would form a company like ISI. Indeed, in those days I was still partial to academic and non-profit enterprises. Were it not for personal financial need, I would have gone to Georgetown University to do research on mechanical translation of Russian with my best fiend, Cas Borkowski, but I was broke. Coincidentally, I received a call from Ted Herdgen of Smith Kline in Philadelphia, who convinced me to set up an IBM punched card system for their new drug Thorazine.

About four months later, fate would intervene again. My son had been living with my sister, but due to a family crisis I became once again a single parent, as had been the case when I was an undergraduate at Columbia University. I brought Stefan to Philadelphia and set up my one-man consulting firm which later became Eugene Garfield Associates. Thanks to the help of Ted Herdgen, we moved to Mullica Hill, New Jersey. In 1960, my company was renamed the Institute for Scientific Information, as I reported recently in Moscow at the 50th Anniversary of VINITI [11]. The rest is history and well documented so I need not repeat here what you can read on my personal website at www.eugenegarfield.org.

However, I would like to add this personal philosophical note. I did not start my career with the aim of becoming wealthy. I was born with the 'information consciousness' gene in me. To this day, I cannot resist writing to friends to tell them they have been cited in a recent obscure publication. When I heard an author recently speak on his biography of Benjamin Franklin I sent him dozens of citations to his work he had never known about. I relished the role I played in informing thousands of authors that they had published a *Citation Classic*. I might have remained simply a researcher and communicator but that was not to be. I tried in vain to convince several non-profit and

governmental organizations to take up the challenge of citation indexing but they adamantly refused to consider the idea. So I was forced to choose the private entrepreneurial route in order to achieve my goal. Were it not for the initial financial success of another harebrained idea, *Current Contents*, the *Science Citation Index* would not have seen the light of day.

In closing, thanks again to the Kaula Foundation for this award, and thanks to all of you for coming! And thanks to Sue Johnson and Nichole McNeely for arranging this splendid event!

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