Tribute To Dan Tonkery

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Note from the author: I would like to acknowledge the help of Helen Henderson in freely sharing some details included in her profile interview with Dan in the journal, *Serials, 23(1), March 2010.* — AA

At the end of March, 2021, the scholarly information community lost a true giant, Dan Tonkery, whose profound influence and amazing career will long be remembered and respected. Before attempting to describe the great impact of Dan's life and work on our industry, I'd like to take the liberty of expressing some personal thoughts. From our first meeting in 1979 at UCLA, Dan Tonkery was my good friend, lifelong mentor, wise teacher, super boss (4 times) and advisor. I am still grappling with his loss, as are hundreds who counted themselves among his colleagues and friends. I have so many wonderful memories of adventures that we shared and accomplishments in which we took pride. He guided my career in exciting ways and introduced me to the wonders of library automation before most knew it existed. And he continued throughout my career to constantly be there with sage advice and caring. I will remember him always and be so grateful that he and his wife Linda were part of my life.

Dan Tonkery was born in a coal-mining region in West Virginia and attended the local one-room school. Jobs on the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad and as a Fuller Brush and encyclopedia salesman introduced him to the twin concepts of automation and selling which would figure so largely throughout his career. After pre-med at David Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tennessee, he studied library science with a specialty in biomedical communications at the University of Illinois in Urbana and then joined a post-graduate training program in biomedical communications at the National Library of Medicine (NLM) where he stayed for ten years.

Dan began his technical services career at NLM with responsibility for selling the concept of Cataloging in Print (CIP) to over 50 major medical publishers and persuading them to include cataloging data in their books. He then was assigned the task of building an online acquisitions system and that started a long career in automating technical services operations. Following the design and implementation of the acquisitions system, he worked on automating other functions including serials and online cataloging. As well, he managed the CATLINE, SERLINE, and AVLINE services at NLM. During that time, Dan won the highest civilian award at NIH for the design and implementation of automated systems for computer management of technical services functions including improved controls on scientific literature. He was also heavily involved in the founding and building of the National Serials Data and CONSER programs with the Library of Congress. He handled the NLM and CLR side of the project and handled negotiations with OCLC to manage the database. Jean Hirons acknowledges in the Summer 1999 issue of *CONSERLine*: "... Dan Tonkery was instrumental in the development of CONSER during the mid 1970s."

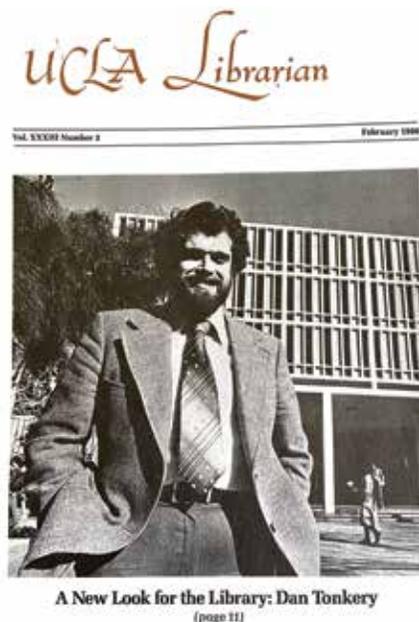Dan came to UCLA from NLM in 1979 as Associate University Librarian for Technical Services and Automation. I was fortunate to be a young UCLA librarian watching in awe as he proceeded to lay off the entire moribund Systems Department and then successfully assembled a very small team (including one talented programmer and a couple of us technical services folks) to automate the library. During his tenure at UCLA, he was responsible for the development of Orion, an online integrated library system which included one of the earliest serials control modules designed to handle more than 90,000 journals with full predictive check-in and holdings updates, as well as an online public access catalog with over 1,000 hard-wired terminals. Orion was the largest locally developed system in any library and successfully operated for twenty years until January 2000. Dan also served as Adjunct Professor at the UCLA Graduate School of Library Service, teaching the automation of technical and database management services. Through his demonstrated knowledge and innovative leadership, he had a significant influence on the staff of the UCLA library as well as the library school. It was also during this time that he met his beloved wife, Linda, who was Head of Circulation at the library. They were married in May, 1981 and their son, Andrew, was born in 1982, joining his older brothers John and Steve. Linda stayed at Dan's side and lovingly supported him in all of his efforts until his recent passing.

Following his successful tenure at UCLA in the early 1980s, Dan began two decades of work in senior management positions with Faxon (twice), Readmore and Blackwell, all well-known and respected subscription agents. In each case, he brought his library and management expertise to bear on the customer service, marketing/sales and information technology aspects of the business. Always mindful of the needs of his library clients, he understood the importance of personal service as well as excellent technology to serve them better. Dan worked constantly with publishers as well as libraries to improve service and efficiency in the serials industry and he continued to be a great promoter of standards such as EDI, strongly supporting the work of SISAC, NISO, and other standards organizations.

Pausing at one point in his career with subscription vendors in the mid-1980s, Dan founded Horizon, a software development company and CD-ROM publisher. Horizon produced the very

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first Medline product on CD-ROM and was the first to license the NLM database. At that time, Dan also worked with the Library Corporation and helped them to design and build the Bibliofile system which was the first full MARC file on CD-ROM. The Horizon software was used by other vendors, including Ingram Book, NewsBank and Faxon, to produce their first CD-ROM products. Horizon was later sold to EBSCO and the first product produced was the SERIALS Directory. EBSCO bought Horizon in 1986 and that software was the foundation of EBSCO Publishing.

A few notable accomplishments during Dan's tenures at various information companies in the 1980s and 1990s should be mentioned here. In his role of Senior Vice-President and Managing Director for North America at Faxon in the early 1980's, he divided the company into several successful markets, expanded the SC-10 serials system, including a very early foray into email, and oversaw the initial design of the Microlinx PC-based serials check-in system. As President and CEO of Readmore, Inc., a small subscription service in New York City, Dan successfully grew the company to become the largest and most advanced technologically medical and corporate library subscription supplier. Readmore developed the first real-time online subscription system, ROSS, as well as a standalone serials check-in and routing system used by over 200 corporate libraries. In addition, Readmore offered two early listservs to the community for exchanging print volumes among libraries, BACKSERV and MEDSERV, and produced one of the first online catalogs, READiCAT. Finally, back at Faxon (then owned by Dawson) for the second time, as President, Dan oversaw the development of several innovative new user-friendly systems including Subscription Depot and License Depot, and once again revitalized the company until it was unfortunately sold to Dick Rowe at RoweCom.

Anticipating the financial demise of Faxon/Rowecom in 2001, Dan moved to a position as Vice President, Director of Business Development at EBSCO Subscription Services. Here he continued to have a positive impact on the serials industry with his work on implementing new technologies and developing tools for electronic resource management for libraries. One of his notable development projects was the A to Z service, including MARC records, which was used by over 1,000 libraries worldwide.
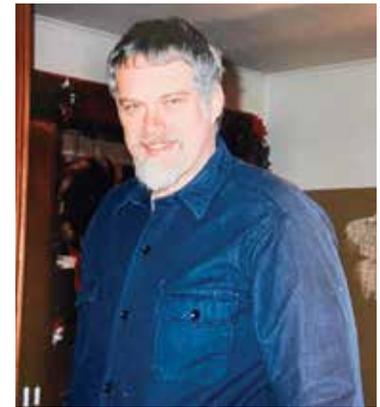
Dan retired from EBSCO in 2009 and began a new phase of his career as a very active and sought-after consultant to the publishing and library industries. His consulting enterprise, Content Strategies, Inc., included among its clients notable publishers such as AMA, NEJM, AIP and major libraries such as the New York Public Library. Perhaps the role that Dan relished the most came at the end of his life as he proudly donned overalls and worked on his own family farm, Tonkfarm, together with his son, Andrew. Lifelong hobbies which Dan enthusiastically

enjoyed included real estate, golf, travel and family gatherings.

In all of his many endeavors, Dan was a tireless discoverer and nourisher of talent with a finely honed ability to see the spark of creativity and talent in people. He encouraged and nurtured many in the technical services, medical library and publishing communities who have gone on to make major contributions of their own. Able to cut through bureaucracy (he would use a stronger word) and shield his staff from organizational obstacles, he set firm directions and made important decisions, enabling those who worked with him to concentrate on being highly innovative and productive. He strongly encouraged risk-taking, allowing his staff to experiment and implement new concepts without fear of failure.

All along, Dan was a very active participant in the scholarly information industry throughout his career, giving countless presentations, writing a number of important articles, and serving on a number of editorial boards of key publications such as Serials Review. He also worked with major library organizations, including terms as President and Treasurer of NASIG (many of us will never forget his appearance as NASIG president wearing a wet suit and holding a surfboard!). Dan served for over 10 years as a board member and treasurer of the prestigious Council on Library and Information Resources. As well, he served on the Board of the Friends of the National Library of Medicine and fulfilled many committee assignments for ACRL and ALCTS.

It is impressive that Dan managed to be successful and influential in both the academic and corporate sides of the scholarly information industry. The serials community was particularly fortunate to have had a librarian of Dan's caliber at the helm of many information companies and automation initiatives. While working in the corporate sector he constantly maintained an active role in professional library associations and served on major committees, was a respected and sought-after speaker, and contributed generously to the professional library literature.

Dan was a very early proponent and implementer of innovation and change management. In his 1983 article, "The transformation of technical services," Dan concluded: "Our role in the information transfer process by the year 2000 will depend on our ability to change and grow with the technology. Technical services librarians must be innovative, informed, and ready to accept the new challenges coming their way." He certainly took these words to heart throughout his career. As a leader, a visionary, a mentor and an active participant, Dan made unparalleled contributions to the library, vendor and publishing industries, earning our ongoing recognition, respect and gratitude for his hard work and lasting impact. He will indeed be missed far into the future, both professionally and personally.

Upon his passing, Dan's wife, Linda, was heartened and honored by the heartfelt sentiments expressed by hundreds of colleagues, competitors and friends from various parts of his life who were fortunate to have known, loved and worked with him. It is impossible to capture them all in print, but we have posted online at *https://www.charleston-hub.com* (ATG Charleston Hub) many reflections and stories which illustrate the lasting impact of the life of Dan Tonkery. 🦐