ence department at McMaster University’s Health Sciences Library, described their job sharing experience from the points of view of the employer and the employee.

Linda Baker discussed the disadvantages and advantages to the employer of a job sharing arrangement, noting that the pros far outweighed the cons. On the negative side, she cautioned that good communications had to be maintained, that there was a possibility of personality conflicts between the job sharers, that there might be a lack of continuity on the job and that one or the other of the job sharing team would be absent from staff meetings. However, on the positive side, job sharing encouraged more productivity and more initiative, the job sharers could act as reliefs for one another when emergencies arose, and the employer is provided with more skills in one position. Since the job sharing team usually derives greater job satisfaction from a working arrangement that allows them freedom, the benefits to the employer of happier employees is obvious.

Panel members then discussed sabbatical leaves and job exchanges from one library to another on the same campus and from one country to another. Eve Buckle described her experience from a practical point of view in which she mentioned salary and tax considerations, checking out accommodations, medical and insurance coverage and the possibility of an exchange of cars. In personal terms, she and other panel members described the benefits of a year away from your job as providing you with the possibility of acquiring new skills and new experiences and of returning to your former position feeling refreshed.

The single disappointing session was held at Queen’s Faculty of Education’s computer lab in order to demonstrate the possibility of using CAI to combat staff shortages. The problem with the session was that the quality of software packages available for library instruction was extremely poor. Among the ones demonstrated were guides to poetry indexes and Current Biography from Calico (Computer Assisted Library Instruction Co., Inc.) and a library skills program from Right On Programs. The general impression of the librarians who attended this session was that the software was elementary and didn’t warrant the amount of time devoted to it in the lab. Most of the participants felt, however, that it was worthwhile in showing that this is an area where there is much room for improvement. It should be somewhat heartening though, to know that, at least for the moment, the human element is not imminently in danger of being replaced.

---

Research at ALA

By Mary Jo Lynch

Director
ALA Office for Research

As Director of ALA’s Office for Research and staff liaison to the ALA Committee on Research and the Library Research Round Table (LRRT) I was delighted to see the initiation of a “Research Forum” column in College and Research Libraries News. The new column should prove to be a useful supplement to the “Research Notes” which already appear in College and Research Libraries. Sharing information about research is a major interest of the Office, the Committee, and LRRT. All of these units welcome the focus on research which ACRL President Sharon Rogers has initiated within ACRL.

Of the three units I am associated with, the Li-
Using the academic computer center

By Ronald Dale Karr

Public Services Librarian
Transportation Library, Northwestern University

Can't wait to get your own desktop microcomputer? Envious of those lucky librarians with Apples and PCs? It may be a while before every librarian has access to a personal computer. But this does not mean that the rest of us must be spectators in the computer revolution.

Most colleges and universities have an academic computer center available to students and faculty, including librarians. These facilities are no substitute for personal computers, to be sure, but they can do much for those who take the time to learn to use them.

The typical academic computer center was established in the 1960s to house a lumbering mainframe computer. Early users were almost exclusively engineering or science students and faculty. Access was through decks of laboriously prepared punch cards; users wrote their own FORTRAN programs. Computer centers haven’t altogether escaped their initial orientation—FORTRAN remains popular—but the great expansion in computing, first by social scientists and now by the entire academic community, has forced the centers to diversify. The micro revolution has cost the centers some of their original clientele while simultaneously increasing demands from new users.

Today it isn’t necessary to learn to program in order to use your computer center. Instead of programming you can utilize a vast array of available software capable of doing almost anything a micro can do (albeit not as conveniently). It is, however, necessary to gain a familiarity with your computer's control language and utilities, since it is through these you access and run software, enter commands and data, and determine output and storage.
Northwestern University’s Vogelback Computing Center features a Cyber CDC 170/730 Mainframe, a DEC VAX-11/780, and numerous printers, plotters, and disk drives.

The best way to get started at your local center is to attend the various seminars and training courses they offer. Make use of the consultants and assistants at the center. Be patient. Computers take time to learn. Older mainframes in particular are not always easy to use—documentation is often poorly written and the systems can be forbidding (or, in computer parlance, “user unfriendly”).

What can you do at your computer center? I’ve used computers in a variety of ways in my job as public services librarian at Northwestern University’s Transportation Library. Northwestern’s Vogelback Computing Center houses two computers, a Cyber CDC 170/730 mainframe and a DEC VAX-11/780 minicomputer. It supports a vast array of printers, plotters, and punches, and can be accessed by numerous CRT terminals at many locations on our two campuses (including the library).

The following tasks were undertaken at our computer center, utilizing existing software packages without actual programming on my part. The hardware and software at your local center will differ, of course, but you’ll probably find similar features available.

Word processing

Word processing is becoming the function most often performed on campus computers. A desktop microcomputer is unquestionably the preferred device. Minis and especially mainframes in a time-sharing configuration are ill-suited for this task; like most installations, the Vogelback Computing Center at Northwestern does not offer true word processing.

But all is not lost. At Northwestern we do have text formatting, the poor man’s word processing. Text is entered using the computer’s editor program (designed for entering data and programs), together with control commands. The formatter—PROSE and RUNOFF are used at Vogelback—is then called to format the text. Margins, justification, line spacing, underscoring, and even boldface can be specified as desired. The text can be printed on a line printer or sent to a letter-quality printer for results almost indistinguishable from an office typewriter.

I use the text formatter to prepare bibliographies, memos, articles (including this one), and guides for users. The great advantage in using the computer is the ease with which a document can be revised, both between working drafts and for those items that require frequent updating. Once written, a document can be stored on disk or tape for future use.

Text formatting on a time-sharing mainframe or mini is clumsier than true word processing, but it sure beats conventional typing.

Statistical analysis

Computers excel at processing statistical data. Over the years numerous software packages have been developed to perform statistical analysis, without the need to write programs. Among the better known of these are SPSS, BMD, Minitab, and Data Text.

I’ve used SPSS for many years, both in scholarly research and in library work. SPSS employs simple commands to enter data and perform analysis. Although SPSS is often used for advanced statistical
How Long Would It Take You to Identify All Biomedical Publications, Related to Engineering, Published in England, in a Large Database or Directory?

You Could Do It in Seconds, With EBSCO/SEARCH.

Introducing EBSCO/SEARCH . . .
The System That Can Search

The Daily-Updated Online Periodicals Directory.

EBSCO/SEARCH—A major EBSCONET OSS Enhancement—is a powerful new information retrieval system for EBSCO’s database including publisher, title and price files. Using natural language commands, you can access information by subject, language, price and much more.

EBSCO/SEARCH gives you fast, efficient access to a database of more than 160,000 serial titles. Simply key in your request, and EBSCO/SEARCH does the serials searching for you. It’s the first information retrieval system of its kind for such an extensive database.

EBSCO/SEARCH is available only through our EBSCONET Online Subscription Service—the online system which allows you to claim, order, route and much more. For more information, call or write your nearest EBSCO office today.
Creating a name and address file

Databases are not solely the province of DIALOG and OCLC. You too can create your own. Vogelback Computing Center at Northwestern has several file and database packages. I used their RIQS system to automate an old name and address file. The RIQS program allows the user to design his own database. I chose a simple eleven-field format consisting of record number, personal name, title, organization, street address, city, state, zip code, phone number, input date, and revision date. RIQS produces a name and organization index, and prints out the text of the entire file. I store the file on tape and update it periodically.

Preparing an index

The Transportation Library catalogs with its own list of subject headings. Geographic terms are generally used only as subheads, so the card catalog does not provide information on a particular city or country. To compensate for this we maintain an index of all subject headings that have been assigned a specific geographic subhead. With this index one can look under the name of a country, state, or city to check which headings have included that geographic term as a subhead.

The original index was prepared many years ago before my arrival at the library. I have supervised several updates since. We store the file on computer tape, broken into many subfiles. The tape is loaded on the computer, updated from a terminal at the library, output to a line printer, and then returned to tape for storage. The files can be manipulated, combined, and split as need be. Recently I merged portions of these files with a new index to create still another index.

Creating a name and address file

Databases are not solely the province of DIALOG and OCLC. You too can create your own. Vogelback Computing Center at Northwestern has several file and database packages. I used their RIQS system to automate an old name and address file. The RIQS program allows the user to design his own database. I chose a simple eleven-field format consisting of record number, personal name, title, organization, street address, city, state, zip code, phone number, input date, and revision date. RIQS produces a name and organization index, and prints out the text of the entire file. I store the file on tape and update it periodically.

Making signs and posters

Like most libraries we must from time to time make signs and posters to announce changes in hours, special events, and other information. Typewriter characters are often too small, and unless a calligrapher is on the premises, hand-made signs are usually disappointing.

The Vogelback Center has written a program to create signs and posters using pen plotters—devices used by engineers and the like to draw graphs. With Vogelback's PRESENT program signs can be made with a few simple formatting commands. The results are quite good. A number of fonts are available—even Old English!—and centering and spacing can be controlled automatically.

There is little excuse for librarians not to make better use of the computer. For the time being only a few of us will be fortunate enough to have a micro on our desks. But almost any academic librarian has access to a computer center. And though it carries neither the prestige nor the convenience of a personal computer, librarians owe it to themselves to find out what their local computer center can do for them.

Seattle Conference proceedings available

ACRL has just published the proceedings of its April 4-7, 1984, conference in Seattle on the theme “Academic Libraries: Myths and Realities.” The proceedings include the papers from the six theme sessions, 47 contributed papers, and the papers from four alternate format sessions. Including the index, the proceedings are over 420 pages in length.

Complimentary copies of the proceedings will be sent to all full registrants who attended the Seattle Conference. A free copy will also be sent to each organization with an exhibit at the conference. Others may purchase copies (prepaid only) from ACRL at $20 for ACRL members and $28 for non-members. The ISBN is 0-8389-6787-6. Send orders to ACRL/ALA, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611-2795.