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 accomodations, 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-

brary Research Round Table is the one most likely to be of interest to ACRL members because it is a unit which has conference activities and gives away money, albeit a small amount. LRRT was officially organized "to contribute toward the extension and improvement of library research; to provide public program opportunities for describing and criticizing library research projects and for disseminating their findings; to orient and educate ALA members concerning research techniques and their usefulness in obtaining information with which to reach administrative decisions and solve problems."

Currently LRRT has a three-part program to achieve the ends just stated. Each year LRRT conducts a Research Paper Competition and awards a $500 prize to an outstanding paper reporting the results of research. The winner is selected by LRRT's Research Development Committee according to guidelines available from the chair or from the Office for Research. The deadline for submission of papers is February 1 of each year; a decision is made by May 1. Unless the author(s) has other plans, the winning paper will be published in *Library and Information Science Research*. The committee chair for 1984–85 is Mildred Lowe, St. John's University, Division of Library and Information Science, Jamaica, NY 11439.

Each year at the ALA Annual Conference, LRRT sponsors two additional activities. Formal presentation of research takes place at a number of "Research Forums." Interested parties are invited to send to the Research Forums Committee by December 15 of each year one-page summaries of work which will be completed by Annual Conference. The Committee groups papers by topic and informs presentors of the time for presentation. For 1984–85 the Committee chair is Pamela Snelson, Drew University Library, Periodicals Department, Madison, NJ 07940.

In addition, LRRT sponsors each year an Information Exchange Suite where research-in-progress may be discussed informally. Help with research design is also available in the Suite. Persons wishing to discuss projects or seeking assistance with any aspect of research design should send the topic to the Information Exchange Suite Committee by April 15 of each year. The Committee will group topics as appropriate and prepare a schedule for Suite discussions. Chair of the Information Exchange Suite for 1984–85 is Eleanor Jo Rodger, Enoch Pratt Free Library, State Network Service, 400 Cathedral Street, Baltimore, MD 21201. A program of events in the Suite is distributed by LRRT at each conference as is a list of "Meetings Related to Research" compiled by the Office for Research and including all relevant programs and committee meetings.

Shirley Fitzgibbons from the School of Library and Information Science at Indiana University is the current chair of LRRT; Irene Hoadley, Director of Libraries at Texas A&M, is the Secretary/Treasurer. Members of ALA may join LRRT for only an additional $5. Join when you renew your ALA membership for 1985!

Using the academic computer center

By Ronald Dale Karr

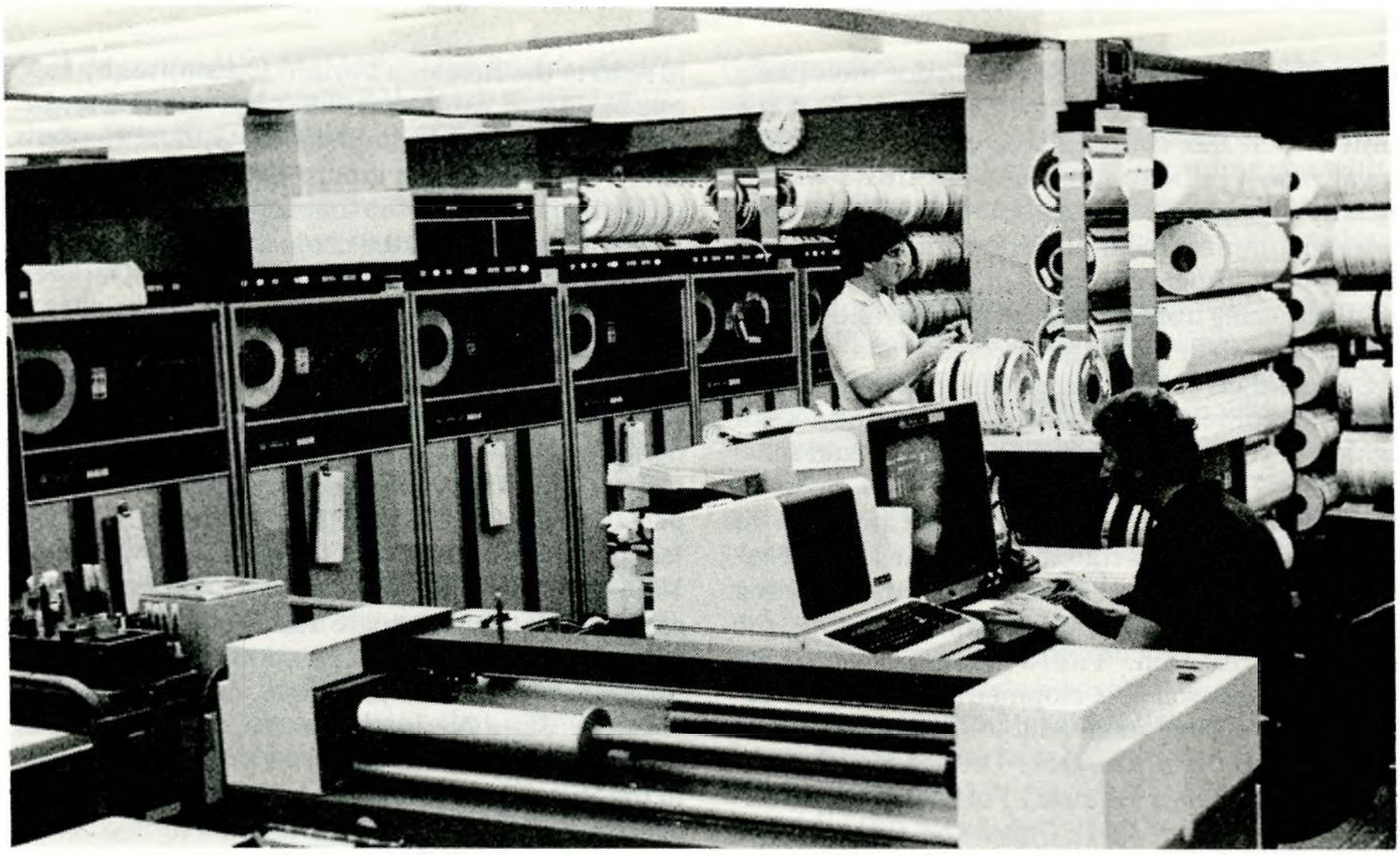
Public Services Librarian
Transportation Library, Northwestern University

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

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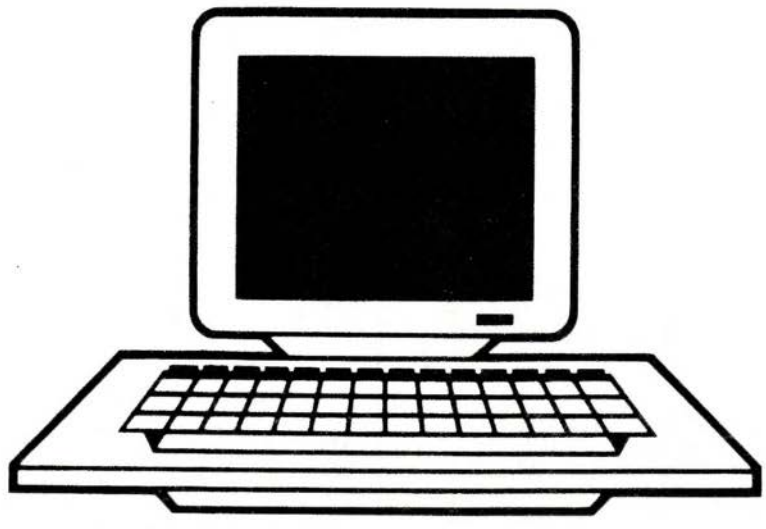

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procedures, like multiple regression or factor analysis, it's also excellent for counting and preparing simple cross tabulations.

SPSS helped me automate a typical library statistical task. I administer a document delivery/interlibrary loan service that processes more than 2,000 requests each year. We compile monthly and annual statistics on the total number of requests, broken down by status of requester, location and affiliation of requester, type of document sought, and so on. We obtained these data by laboriously tallying the requests by hand.

I automated the compilation of these figures by assigning each individual request a seven-digit code, with each digit representing information about the requester, the item requested, and the action taken. For example, the first digit is coded 1 if the request is from a library, 0 if not. The second digit indicates the form of the request (1 = by telephone, 2 = in person on site, 3 = by mail, 4 = by ILL form, 5 = by OCLC ILL subsystem). The third digit tells the location of the requester (1 = Illinois, 2 = other U.S., 9 = foreign).

The codes are written at the top of each request sheet or form (coding goes quickly once you get the hang of it), and they are input to the computer from a terminal in a batch, a month at a time, and saved as a file. My SPSS routine is then run, producing a full count of each variable as well as any specified cross tabulations (i.e., location of requester by form of request). I can process a month's statistics in an hour, including coding and input, and the data can be saved for future analysis at any time. Each year I combine the monthly figures to produce an annual summary.

The computer can be used for nearly any statistical chore. With the ready availability of proven software packages like SPSS there is little excuse for continuing to compile and process data by hand.

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 with 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 comands. 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.