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Online Searching

When this issue comes off the presses I will have been gone from the Hoosier State for almost two years. Working on this issue has been pleasurable for me because it has reminded me of the many things that I learned while I was a librarian in Indiana. I knew about online searching before I came to Indiana in 1978, but it was not something that I ever thought that I would do. It was just an innovation that I read about in *Library Journal* or *American Libraries*, something that was being done in a few specialized libraries in California or on the East Coast. In 1979 some patrons at my library (Wabash College) asked for online searches and we began to offer that service. The demand for the service grew steadily and online searching became a major part of my professional responsibilities. I learned about vendors, equipment, file organization, commands, and many other things. The most important thing that I learned was that new technologies and new services that we read about are not just "out there." New technologies and new developments that are taking place elsewhere may provide us with better ways to serve our patrons. Integrating new technologies and new services into our libraries is a challenge that we can meet, and every new development can be an opportunity which allows us to give our patrons better service.

Three of the articles in this issue show how Indiana libraries responded to the challenge and the opportunities of online searching. The article by Carol Sue Chapman and Harriet Cohen tells how Indianapolis-Marion County Public Library established online searching at its Central Library. Training and administration are discussed, along with the place of online searching in reference services. Susan Thompson and Pat Ensor report on online searching at Indiana State University. Their paper is especially valuable for the infor-

mation that it gives on funding this expensive service. Ann Bristow Beltran's article takes a broad view of online services, showing us the wide range of online resources that are available and how they are used for reference work at Indiana University-Bloomington. A final article by Pat Ensor steps back from the local scene to survey the newest developments in software for online searching: it is a good introduction to the next innovation in online services.

Taken together these articles show how online searching has become a part of reference service in Indiana libraries. We are fortunate to have two statewide organizations supporting online searching, and this is an appropriate place to mention the roles that Indiana Cooperative Library Services Authority (INCOLSA) and the Indiana Online Users Group (IOLUG) play in promoting online searching. Through INCOLSA and its dedicated Information Retrieval Specialist Becki Whitaker, librarians become searchers, and at IOLUG meetings searchers come together to discuss both philosophical and practical questions. Both organizations have my thanks. I'd also like to thank Mary Beth Minick of Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis and Rebecca Shipley of Ball Corporation who worked with me in selecting and editing these articles. Working with them reminded me of the professionalism and spirit of cooperation that I found within the Indiana online community.

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