

Introduction

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This Festschrift honors Thomas P. Turner (1967–2003), a Metadata Librarian at Cornell University who died at much too young an age. He is sorely missed by his family and friends, but remembered for his intellect, gentle nature, clear expression of ideas, strong sense of collaboration, and his love of poetry. Before succumbing to malignant melanoma in 2003, Tom made a positive and continuing impact on the quality and diversity of Cornell University Library's digital collections. Tom, whose Cornell career included positions in public services and technical services, was a librarian during a time of considerable growth in our digital collections. During this period there were many developments in technology and standards, and we relied on forward-looking, intelligent and talented staff to meet these challenges and opportunities with energy, innovativeness, and an appreciation and understanding of the needs of users of online resources. Tom was very much involved in these activities at Cornell, both as a leader within the Cornell community and as an active team member and advisor to numerous projects and initiatives.

Tom joined the staff at the Albert R. Mann Library at Cornell University in 1995 following the completion of an M.A. in English Language and Literature and an M.L.S in Information and Library Science at the University of Michigan. He was first appointed to the position of Public Services Librarian, and then applied two years later for a newly-created position in Technical Services. Tom was accepted for this position, and became

the first Metadata Librarian at Cornell, and by our accounts, the first in the United States, as well. The rapid growth of digital collections and their potential uses required dedicated focus and attention. Tom quickly and adeptly took on a significant role in the development and enhancement of digital collections and services. His different professional experiences and skills were evident in his work, always looking at projects and services from multiple perspectives, never forgetting the needs of the users, whether those users would be creating metadata during production and processing, or whether they would be accessing the information for their research and education. He was a team leader or key participant in the development of several ground-breaking digital collections at Cornell, such as the *Core Historical Literature of Agriculture*.¹ These collections, which continue to grow, have been nationally recognized for their quality, comprehensiveness and service.

Tom was also well-respected internationally. He was invited to present a paper at the International Conference on Dublin Core and Metadata Applications in 2001, and was asked to consult on metadata issues with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in 2002. Just a few months after Tom's death, in the spring of 2003, the Library received notification that he had been awarded the State University of New York (SUNY) Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Librarianship. This award celebrates an individual's skill in librarianship, service to the University and the profession, and continuing professional growth. In all these areas, Tom excelled.

¹ Among the digital collections in which Tom Turner played a significant role, in either their initial or ongoing development, are: Core Historical Literature of Agriculture (CHLA), <http://chla.library.cornell.edu/> (8. Mar. 2008); Cornell University Geospatial Information Repository (CUGIR), <http://cugir.mannlib.cornell.edu/> (8. Mar. 2008); and Home Economics Archive: Research, Tradition, and History (HEARTH), <http://hearth.library.cornell.edu/> (8. Mar. 2008)

When plans were first put forth for a Festschrift to honor Tom, there was an immediate and positive response from his colleagues. The authors of the chapters of this volume had the privilege and opportunity to work with Tom on various projects, or knew him from his well-regarded reputation for innovation, collaboration, and ability to look at the larger picture while simultaneously attending to the finer details, both of which are essential in developing a digital collection. The chapters also mirror experiences in Tom's own career, from experiencing and influencing the evolution of technical services and metadata librarianship to dealing with varied issues for special projects. The chapters by Karen Calhoun, Diane Hillmann and Martin Kurth involve important aspects of the changing roles for librarians. Many of the other chapters look at specific issues, projects or challenges. Tom was involved in many of these same activities, contributing his skills, intellect, and curiosity. All of the authors have been active in the Cornell University Library's Metadata Working Group, a forum for education and discussion that Tom was instrumental in forming. Prior to its establishment, there was no campus group that analyzed metadata issues, shared ideas and project plans, or celebrated metadata successes. Tom saw the need for such a group and lobbied persuasively for its creation.² Tom enjoyed collaboration and the exchange of ideas and would have been honored to have his colleagues devote the time and effort to share their thoughts and experiences related to metadata and digital collections in this volume.

Writing about the importance of staffing resources and skills needed in today's libraries, Tom made the following observations:

² For more information on the Metadata Working Group, see <http://metadata-wg.mannlib.cornell.edu/> (8. Mar. 2008).

In the constantly changing digital environment, the hiring, training, and mentoring of staff take on even greater importance. Staff provides an infrastructure of expertise that makes it possible to deal with the ongoing changes libraries face in the digital environment. Staff members must be creative and innovative in their approach to solving the problems associated with the creation, distribution, and access to digital information. Flexibility and the willingness to learn and grow are imperative in a time of changing technologies, infrastructures, and services. Making the investments necessary to building an excellent staff is a key ingredient in the formula that will produce an excellent library, digital or otherwise.³

Although Tom was writing about staffing needs for an increasingly digital library, these words could be applied to him just as easily. It is such able staff as Tom, willing to explore and meet new challenges, who move the library and librarianship forward.

³ Raskin, Howard and Thomas P. Turner, "Hiring, Training, and Mentoring Staff." In *Becoming a Digital Library*, edited by Susan J. Barnes, New York: Marcel Dekker, Inc., 2004, p. 115.