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# Editorial

Peggy Johnson



I have been reflecting, over the last few months, on the changes in how I conduct research and write. When I wrote my masters thesis for the University of Chicago Graduate Library School (R.I.P.), I used the trusty note card system to record my findings, being careful to write the source on each card and the page number if I was quoting from it. I used printed indexes and the card catalog to find sources, and knew by heart the Joseph Regenstein Library stacks that that held the library science materials. The worst part of the process was assembling the information into a coherent whole. I typed, retyped, and retyped some more, and literally cut and taped it together. I gave up when I was finally at the point of typing the final error-free manuscript and hired someone to do it. He had to use carbon paper to create two copies.

Twenty years later, when I researched and wrote the thesis for my second masters, I had a computer. Photocopiers were ubiquitous and I made good use of them. I had access to indexes on CD-ROM and, though they were not necessarily retrospective, searching them was so much easier than dragging heavy bound volumes over to a table and noting possible sources on a piece of paper. Because I used a computer, turning the thesis into my first book was not too difficult.

Forward fifteen years and I am working on another book. Writing is still a painful process (though so much easier with electronic cut and paste), but researching is truly a pleasure—and a seductive one, at that. My library has access to an extensive collection of indexes and journals online, with link resolvers and other features that make moving from the citations to the articles extremely easy. I use Google Scholar to locate articles that cite my initial sources and to follow paths to more sources. Online journals with live links to the sources cited in articles take me further down the rabbit hole. The challenge for me is to stop following the paths that lead me to more and more sources and to shift my focus to assembling my notes and thoughts into a lucid whole. I have used and appreciated the advances in information access over the years, of course, but writing my current book really brought home how researching and writing have changed.

As a journal editor, I am benefiting from the ease with which I can verify citations and check URLs in the papers submitted to *LRTS*. I also check to see if submitting authors have lifted prose from other authors or their own previously published works. A simple two- or three-sentence search reveals plagiarism in ways not possible just a few years ago. Being able to edit drafts created with word processing software simplifies the revision process for authors and for me. And it is getting better—soon *LRTS* will implement an automated, online manuscript system, streamlining the submission and peer-review process for authors, reviewers, and me. We will let you know as soon as the new system is active.