

## The Legacy of Anne Lipow

*Karen Schneider*

### Sad News

Anne Lipow, renowned library trainer and consultant, died yesterday, September 9, around 10:30 PM, after a long battle with cancer. Anne was the founder and director of Library Solutions Institute and Press. She was the author of numerous books and articles, including "Crossing the Internet Threshold" and "The Virtual Reference Librarian's Handbook." Her "Rethinking Reference" institutes were recognized as being internationally significant and contributed to Anne's receipt of the ALA Isadore Gilbert Mudge/R.R. Bowker award for "a distinguished contribution to reference librarianship." ...

Posted at 3:52 PM in People | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(95\)](#)

I saw Anne twice in her last few weeks—a time when even knowing she was near death she organized a dinner party for friends, against all advice, to make the house just right, as befit a woman who equipped her kitchen with two ovens so that holiday meals would never feature cold stuffing. But the Anne I remember best was not the Anne of half-tilted hospital beds, trays crowded with prescription pills, or the chalky pallor of late-stage cancer. The Anne I remember best was not even the Anne many of us knew, a bright-eyed sparrow of a librarian who kept her thick brunette hair sensibly bobbed and her pale skin free of makeup and in the tradition of many lifelong Berkeleyans

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*Technology in Libraries: Essays in Honor of Anne Grodzins Lipow*, ed. Roy Tennant. Lulu.com, 2008.

warded away the ocean chill with what appeared to be infinite combinations of jeans, turtlenecks, and clogs.

The Anne of my memory was a golden blur, a magnificent dress wafting around her like parachute silks as she floated full-tilt through the rosewood rooms of San Francisco's City Club, laughing as the music tinkled and the glitterati of librarianship drank wine and noshed and kibitzed and hundreds of faces turned her way, smiling at Anne ascendant. I can feel her warm arms clasping my shoulders and hear the breathy drama of her voice, which was given to italics and exclamation points—"But you two do *not* know one another? How could that *be*? Do you *like* the hor dieovers? But have you tasted *this* one? Isn't the music *amazing*?"—and again I am captivated, amazed as always not only by what she contributed to our profession, but by the sheer solar power of her presence, a woman so admired that her handwriting could be found on the whiteboards of the UC Berkeley Library a decade after her departure.

Dear Steve and Family,

I don't remember when I first met Anne, but I think it was on Telegraph Avenue where she was selling her design for a cookbook holder. ...

Posted by: Carol Starr | September 28, 2004 10:22 AM

In researching my friend and mentor, I briefly encountered an Anne I did not recognize, a woman of pleasant but otherwise unremarkable accomplishments and a forgettable lists of jobs. Anne arrived in Berkeley in 1957 with Art, her first husband, graduated from Berkeley's library school in 1961, and bore three children. Anne proceeded to spend her entire professional career in Berkeley, California, a duchy of limited growth (one of the few towns in the Bay Area to lose population in the last half-century) and famously liberal posturing. Anne kept her house on Oregon Street as a personal office and salon for receiving librarian visitors even after she had moved across the Bay to Belvedere and had largely retired from the publishing and consulting work that followed her retirement in 1992 after thirty years in

the UC Berkeley library system, the only library she ever worked in. Even Anne's first decade at the library—as a bibliographer, then acquisitions librarian, and then cataloger—does not disturb the illusion of a demure woman carefully organizing the written word.

Appearances deceive; and everyone who knew Anne for more than a minute saw that Anne did not need to move somewhere else for “a change”; she simply changed where she was, over and over again.

I can see Anne, leaning back in her chair, gazing out the windows of room 386 into the gray Berkeley morning sky toward Haviland Hall and the tall trees along the north edge of campus, wrapped up in thought and miles away from us all, as clearly as if it were yesterday. The dreamer and the immensely practical, both rolled up in Anne.

Posted by: David Kessler at September 15, 2004 02:36 PM

From early in her career, Anne was an intellectual jackdaw. As she moved through UC Berkeley Library's departments for bibliography, acquisitions, cataloging, systems, and cooperative services, she gathered every bright gadget, idea, and person who came her way and used her booty to build nests great and small from which she hatched marvelous, sometimes insane, always inspired ideas. This was not limited to librarianship. In addition to everything else going on in her life—children, marriage (and divorce, and eventually remarriage), librarianship, labor organizing, free speech activism, feminism—Anne designed a redwood dreidel she crafted on Wednesday nights with her friends the Metzgers, and in the 1970s sold these dreidels on Shattuck Avenue so that Berkeley's good little liberal Jewish children would not have to spin a plastic top at Chanukah.

Anne was notorious for her serial crushes on small, “time-saving” household devices that she pushed on friends left and right. Anne, always prepared, carried two or three extra gadgets with her at all times, ranging from battery operated personal fans to apple peelers, mezzalunas, and hooks for eyeglasses. (One of her memorial services featured a table of her favorite

gadgets, including several garlic presses, one of which her friends deemed actually useful.)

She wouldn't just sit quietly waiting for someone to approach her — no, she would proudly announce to every passerby "Look at how well it spins — here — try it." I remember once when some African American kids looked at her as somewhat crazy and responded "What's that? Why would anyone want it?" She immediately went into an enthusiastic pitch she thought they could relate to—it was a gambling device, and they could make a lot of money with it, and gave them its revolutionary history, and lo and behold she had another sale.

Posted by: Stephen Silberstein at September 16, 2004 12:23 PM

For all her love of gadgets and technology, Anne was not a girl geek or computer nerd. She had no interest in writing computer code, leaving that for Steve, the man who much later would become her second husband. (Steve worked with Anne in the Library Systems Office in the 1970s before departing to start the library software company, Innovative Interfaces.) Anne's less-technical perspective meant that she saw applications from the outside in, as gadgets that people used. Where programmers saw piles of machine code performing functions, she saw implications and outcomes.

One gadget Anne understood early on was the software code written for the precursor to UC's Melvyl, one of the first online catalogs. Anne—always thinking about the user, always trying to connect the lumpish library to the people it served, always able to see the inventions inside the invention—quickly realized that the Ur-Melvyl system could take the data sent to it—the content of a typical catalog card—and process it in new and creative ways. Computers could be instructed to do the kind of searching—such as looking for words out of order, like "Jane Austen" instead of "Austen, Jane"—that was impossible in a card-based system.

Those scenes where Anne convinced programmers to exploit the flexibility of machine code are lost to time, but those of us who were around when Anne learned to cook, in the last ten years, can easily envision them.

Anne acquired her culinary skills the same way she accomplished everything else—by first declaring a state of emergency, and then wielding her formidable charm and powers of persuasion. “For most of her life she was enthusiastically proud that she didn’t and indeed couldn’t cook at all,” said Steve. But in the late 1990s, Anne had an epiphany. Cooking—it’s important! *Everyone* must learn to cook! Especially Anne! Right *now*! Next came the seemingly unconquerable requirements: Anne would only learn recipes that could be prepared in ten minutes or less, even by a rank novice. Then Anne called in the experts, phoning everyone she knew with cooking skills and convincing them to give her cooking advice, recipes, and tips. Anne politely rejected advice that ran counter to her messianic vision, preferring to pull converts to her cause. In a city that bragged of “slow food,” where every item on restaurant menus was qualified with heirloom-this and baby-that, Anne

Halibut Alaska (a favorite of Anne’s)

4 pieces halibut steak, about 6 oz. each

1 C. dried bread crumbs

3/4 chopped onion

3/4 C. mayo

3/4 C. sour cream

Paprika

1. Preheat oven to 500 degrees.

2. Lightly grease a baking dish with butter.

3. Rinse the halibut in cold water and pat dry. Spread the bread crumbs on a paper towel. Dip both sides of the halibut in the bread crumbs and then place in the baking dish.

4. In a small bowl combine the onion, mayo, and sour cream. Spread over the halibut. Sprinkle with paprika.

5. Bake for 20 minutes.

Serves 4

Serve with roasted red potatoes and green beans.

From *On Your Own* by Alice Stern, Straight Arrow Press, 1996.

stoutly insisted that faster cooking was better. Then came the victory march as Anne, eyes gleaming with triumph, shamed her skeptics by conjuring up elegant ten-minute meals with the élan of a television cooking host. “You see? It only takes a *minute!* And only *six ingredients!*” And on her immaculately-set table she would slide four servings of the best cooking you had eaten in as long as you could remember.

From similar circumstances arose the Serials Keyword Index, developed in 1973 through code written by Walt Crawford, then working at UC Berkeley (he later moved on to the Research Libraries Group).

By current standards, the Serials Keyword Index was a quaint affair: a crude keyword catalog hoovered from the library’s online serial holdings, comprised first of a massive printout on greenbar paper, and later of over 100 microfiche sorted neatly onto the yellow pasteboard wings of fiche readers available in the Library. (Through a later project of Anne’s, more fiche readers would be spread throughout University departments.) But by the standards of information science in 1973, the Index was as important as if Anne had discovered fire (or learned to cook). Before the creation of the Index, if you wanted to find journals about education, you had to know that the *Los Angeles Business Educator* and *Studies in Education* existed; there was no other way to find them other than stumbling across their titles while searching print indexes to education literature, which were far from comprehensive. The Serials Keyword Index changed that: now a library user could use the term “Education” to find related journals—the librarian’s equivalent of a ten-minute recipe.

Anne wanted it. Everyone needed it. Right *now!*

Sample listings for the keyword EDUCATION:			
American Society for Engineering (Business EDUCATION--California.)	Los Angeles business educator	T61.S6	ENGI
Challenges in EDUCATION, Culture, and social welfare.	Nuriel Hasan, Saiyid	F869.L8L349	BANC
(Studies in EDUCATION (new series) ; 1)	Rosen Harold, ed. Language and	LC191.N85	MAIN
	LB5.L56 ser.2 no.1		ED-P

Anne persuaded the systems department to generate the Index every two weeks, which with the glacially slow, primitive computers of that era was a

major commitment of human and machine time. She then wrangled funding for the fiche production and related equipment required to display the fiche (I can see the meetings: Anne polite but passionate, librarians doubtful about the expense and staff time for something no one really *needed*), then convinced other librarians to use the Index and persuaded Richard Dougherty, the university librarian, to be its champion.

The path of librarianship is littered with the burned-out hulks of good ideas that lost airspeed and eventually crashed, but BAKER, a document delivery service that debuted in November, 1973, on the heels of the Serials Keyword Index, survives almost thirty years later not only essentially as Anne first designed it in 1973, but survives also, in a broader, more powerful sense, as a building block contributing to the growing profession-wide commitment to timely user service.

Anne had the unique quality of wearing several hats at the same time. She could walk into my office, as she did on numerous occasions, and give me hell about this or that, and then return a couple of hours later, in a completely different mindset, so that we could work together to develop an idea we were both interested in, like BAKER.

Posted by: Richard M. Dougherty | September 15, 2004 5:36 AM

Every large university now considers in-office document delivery to faculty a routine offering (usually now fee-based), but delivery and pickup of books and documents was almost unheard of in the 1970s, however obvious it seems in retrospect for a huge campus Balkanized into tiny feudal departments spread across dozens of woodsy, hilly acres—“an obstacle course,” Anne called it—in an era when all knowledge was held captive in paper books and articles isolated in one physical facility. “Many people scoffed at the idea of such a thing,” observed Howard Besser, then a library student working for Anne (and now a professor of information science). But Dougherty, a brisk university librarian with interesting ideas, was determined to see document delivery happen. “I had started a campus-wide delivery

service while I was still at the University of Colorado in the late sixties. It was greatly appreciated by the faculty, but it was also controversial because a few faculty thought the money should be spent on books and journals, and not such a ‘frivolous’ service.”

No doubt Anne’s eyes lit up at the triple-threat challenge of something new, something controversial, and something that leveraged the automated services just emerging from the Systems Office. Berkeley faculty predicted failure and squawked at the cost—“Financially impossible,” “Useless waste of resources,” “Poor use of library funds” they grumped before BAKER rolled out—but Anne, at full tilt, smiled and kept going.

BAKER—named for the five-number extension that reached Anne and her team—was a Rube Goldberg device cobbled together from card catalogs, answering machines, hand-me-down library catalog microfiche from the Circulation department, and library vans in which her long-haired student assistants zoomed around Berkeley’s tree-lined campus, plunking books and articles in faculty mailboxes. Despite its stone-soup beginnings, BAKER was soon an enormously popular service that helped rejuvenate the library’s presence on campus, much as coffee bars and free wifi have helped pick up the image of this decade’s libraries. Soon faculty members could not remember that they had not wanted document delivery, and by 1975 they were willing to pay for it out of their departmental funds.

“For the first time in four and a half years I’ve been at Berkeley, I now feel that the Main Library is a usable research resource rather than the hindrance it has so frequently seemed to be,” admitted one academic to Anne. Other faculty members, enamored of door-to-door delivery, suddenly discovered the value of BAKER, arguing that in “sheer economic terms” due to time saved on trips to the library, it was an invaluable, indispensable service. BAKER was a hit with the Library staff, who soon realized that BAKER ramped up their status among the faculty, who as Anne later wryly noted were “amazed at the library’s ability to locate materials they themselves had been unable to find after long searches.”

Early 1981 was not a lighthearted time for librarians at UC Berkeley. Library staff were fractious and anxious; change was afoot, and many did not like it. For years the library administration—held under sway by a “vocal



section of the staff,”<sup>1</sup> as Anne later baldly stated in an article in *Library Journal* — had shied away from closing the card catalog and moving to an online catalog. But the cost of filing card catalogs had risen to \$100,000 in 1980 — big dollars in those days — and UC Berkeley had a backlog of 125,000 unfilled catalog cards. The final blow came from the rules changes in AACR2, published in 1978, that could not reasonably be implemented in a library the size of UC Berkeley without turning to automation.

In the fall of 1980, the Library administration had decreed the closure of the card catalog; then, under pressure from resistant staff, the administration reversed its decision; then finally accepted the inevitable and pushed the library on an irrevocable course towards change.

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QUESTION:      What's wrong with cards?
WRONG ANSWER 1: We're trying to conserve paper.
WRONG ANSWER 2: Do you have any idea how hard
                 it is to get someone to punch
                 holes in 3x5 cards?
WRONG ANSWER 3: They're terrible! They
                 multiply in the night and
                 cause all our filing errors.
RIGHT ANSWER:
Cards work well for small and medium-
sized libraries but when you are dealing
with the cards for over 5 million books,
things get a lot stickier. Berkeley spends
almost $150,000 a year just to file cards
in its many catalogs and making corrections
to the card catalog is an almost insurmountable
and never-ending task. This along with the
changes in cataloging rules that will start
in January 1981 caused the library to
consider a more efficient method of producing
and changing catalog records. A computerized
catalog was the obvious answer since it
allows for relatively easy corrections and
maintenance and there is no card filing
involved.

*****
To fiche or not to fiche - that is no
longer the question.
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Anne brought her light touch to the tense atmosphere. “Change prepares the ground for revolution,” she wrote with tongue firmly in cheek in *Quotations from Chairman Joe*. This small, pocket-sized book—another Anne Gadget—became the doxology for the Catalog Instruction Group, 28 librarians known with poetic license as the “Gang of 24.”

*Quotations*—perhaps the first-ever handbook for using

an online catalog—is a wee red pamphlet perfect for tucking in a skirt pocket—yet another example of Anne’s handy gadgets. *Quotations* is so well-known in the Berkeley crowd that a generation of librarians can cite examples of the “wrong answers” librarians were advised not to provide patrons: “If we didn’t make it hard for you, we’d be out of a job”; “That’s for me to know and you to

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<sup>1</sup> Fortunately, this never happens any more.

find out”; and “Don’t pay any attention—nothing’s changed.” It was a tough time, but a small red book helped.

Anne’s experiences with BAKER and the Serials Keyword Index lead Anne to a natural conclusion: Berkeley’s faculty did not know how to use the Library. So in the 1980s Anne designed training classes tailored to faculty needs, and called these classes Faculty Seminars “so that faculty wouldn’t be turned off,” remembered Dougherty, who added, “There used to be a common expression: ‘What can you tell a Berkeley faculty member? Answer: Very little.’ Anne wanted to avoid the appearance of talking down to the faculty. I think she was successful.”

Anne’s appointment as Education Officer in 1982—yet another new position created based on her groundwork in the area of staff and user education—only accelerated the Library’s automation process.

## TWO WAYS TO GO!

<p><b>UCB CATALOG 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• AUTHOR-TITLE</li><li>• SUBJECTS</li></ul> <p><small>Includes materials acquired by UCB libraries through 1980.</small></p>		<p><b>UCB CATALOG 2</b> <small>Available at all UCB libraries.</small></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• BOOKS <small>A list of materials acquired by UCB libraries after 1976.</small></li><li>• SERIALS <small>A complete list of serials at UCB libraries.</small></li><li>• SUBJECTS</li></ul>
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**UC BERKELEY LIBRARIES**

I first met Anne when she came to help us while I was running the Apple Library. We wanted to create a series of workshops in the early 90’s on using the Internet. We proudly showed her our course outlines and marketing materials, and in her wonderful, kind way she told us to toss away what we’d done and start over. And of course, she was absolutely right! ... We are all incredibly lucky to have had her in our lives.

Posted by: Monica Ertel at September 12, 2004 02:24 PM

She not only taught library staff how to use automated systems, she proselytized freely about why, and with typical good humor and creativity, conditioned Library staff to be automation-friendly and to be apostles of access for their users. Humorous, proto-Garfieldian characters such as CatFiche graced educational posters Anne produced, illustrated by UC librarian and artist Gary Handman; “advice columns” providing comfort to librarians who missed the card catalog appeared in the *CU News*; and peppy, funny posters—in an academic library, no less—helped librarians and patrons alike navigate the complex new waters of library automation.

The 1980s were when Anne developed her workshop, “Public Service under Pressure,” designed to help librarians handle “common pressure situations” faced on public service desks, such as angry patrons or long lines during busy hours. Once again, a message that might have stuck in some craws went down easily once Anne spun it with her typical humor and enthusiasm. Anne at first held these classes on her personal time for a local public library system, which suggests she may have had to prove the value of these classes before the library agreed to include them in the curriculum; but once word-of-mouth began about these classes, UC Berkeley not only held these courses regularly until Anne retired but sent Anne and her good friend and colleague Sue Calpestri on road trips around the country to share UC’s skills with other libraries—the “circuit preacher” speaking/consulting route that some librarians have turned into 21<sup>st</sup>-century careers.

Ann flew through life.

Posted by: Suzanne Riess | September 15, 2004 6:22 PM

I met Anne in her “retirement,” when she was the publisher of Library Solutions Press. In a column for *American Libraries* I wrote that “everything Library Solutions Press publishes is stupendously useful,” and Anne used that heartfelt blurb throughout the life of her publishing house. (When I first met Anne, in fact, I thought she was just a nice librarian with a vanity press.)

Anne, as a publisher, was much like Anne the librarian. She had started her publishing business in 1993 for a typical Anne reason: traditional

publishers were far too damn slow to meet the swelling demand for her Internet handbooks. Beginning with *Crossing the Internet Threshold*—one of the first clear, librarian-oriented guides to using the ‘net—Library Solutions Press proceeded to be the premier publishing house for library-oriented Internet training manuals, filling a crucial publishing gap during the 1990s.

Anne was not just any publisher. She used union labor, paid her authors monthly, and bought back unsold books; not only that, but her books were handsome, well-edited, and copyedited to a fare-thee-well. A couple of years before she died, Anne decided to get out of the publishing business, and my favorite Post-It of all time is Anne’s uncharacteristically caustic note to me fuming that she would never write for that publisher again. Sadly, she was correct.

Throughout her last years, at her swank parties at San Francisco’s City Club or her New Year’s receptions at her home in Tiburon, Anne was a hostess who “had the fantastic grace to treat each guest as if you were the only guest,” as her friend Maryll Telegdy remembered at one of Anne’s memorial services. No doubt Anne’s graciousness helped the forces for automation prevail in the 1970s and 1980s; by all accounts, she paid close attention to every person involved in the change process, explaining herself exhaustively. As Calpestri recalls, if someone didn’t agree with Anne, Anne reacted as if it was because she had explained the situation incorrectly. “She’d be trying to make a point and the person wouldn’t get it. Anne would say, ‘Give me another chance.’ She would just keep trying; she never had emotional vocabulary to be impatient with others.”

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Seeing her name in the *Chronicle* yesterday, I learned that somewhere inside me there had always been the secret hope and expectation that Anne would live to be at least ninety-five and that the world would be better off because she was somewhere among us, serving the greater public good. Now that burden shifts to those of us still walking the planet.

Posted by: John Truxaw | September 13, 2004 11:31 AM

I repeatedly tried to end this farewell to Anne on that note, but I was distracted by the ghostly image of her handwriting on the whiteboard at the Teaching Library. In researching the history of Anne Lipow, I knew ahead of time that with Anne's death we had lost an important primary source for understanding her life—Anne herself. But in my librarian hubris I was confident that research could fill in any blanks that human subjects could not. My confidence began dwindling when I dug through databases, hunting for accounts of BAKER and Melvyl and early automation, only to discover that the online indexes for the scientific literature of our profession stop in the mid-1970s at best, and that is assuming we can be satisfied with citation indexes; full-text articles do not go back farther than the 1980s in most cases. I was able to turn to the print indexes, but I had to drive forty miles to do so, as Stanford, the university closest to me at the time, no longer carries the print indices for *Library Literature* (and because Stanford is a private school, its Library would not give me access to their physical holdings without an “institutional” pass, which I had no means to procure).

Deep in the quiet and orderly bowels of Doe Library, I felt consternation and dismay at the tenuous quality of nearly fifty years' worth of *CU Library News*, a weekly newsletter of the UC Berkeley library system (published electronically since 1994). I had spent many hours reading several decades' worth of the *CU News* to garner facts and confirm dates—a strategy I did not choose, but which was forced upon me because the only index to the print version of this newsletter, a card index, no longer exists. Based on my research, *CU News* is the most significant historical record of this period of librarianship (and of its leaders, such as Anne), but it is a record that will soon be as lost as the libraries of Alexandria if we do not take heed. Though I gingerly tiptoed through the fading buckram volumes, I felt history slipping through my hands. Yellowing pages slid out (of course I put them back!); old bindings creaked; and I saw ink fading and paper crumbling, as if Anne's years

in the Library were a dream about to slip from my mind upon awakening. For some documents, such as *Quotations*, I used my personal “grey literature” sources—begging copies from Anne’s friends and family—rather than interlibrary loan because I hesitated to send the lone circulating copy of an item into the wilds of the U.S. postal service.

Every time Anne trained, she published materials, as well, from tiny red books to large, handsome training guides on the Internet. In all this writing and publishing, in all of her guidebooks and printing and colorful signs and clever pocket-sized guides, it is as if Anne was sending us a message, moving through a room in a swift golden blur, reminding us of our legacy.

Anne’s work was too important, there is far too much yet to understand, to let it crumble away in the slow forgotten fires that consume the paper record. This must change: we must digitize and make globally available everything related to that era—*UC Library News*, *Quotations from Chairman Joe*, and every bit of grey literature we can scabble from the echoing halls of the past. We need to be able to carry Anne with us in our pocket, to be able to continue to see the ghost of her writing on the walls of our profession. She has been patiently, enthusiastically, and with great humor telling us how to do this for over forty years; it would honor her memory if we showed her we were listening.

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Thanks to University of San Francisco librarians Debbie Malone, Penny Scott, and Sherise Kimura, and the nameless gentleman at the Periodicals Desk who jimmied open the stuck microfiche drawer, for their above-and-beyond research assistance with this portrait.

I often think of her when I need to be bold.

Posted by: John Ober | September 13, 2004 4:57 PM