Never the Same
River
Libraries and Technological Change

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You can’t step in the same river twice

- The only constant is change
A Brief Personal History

- Late 1970s: Mimeographed catalog cards
- Early 1980s: Wrote a BASIC program on a Commodore PET
- Early 1980s: Implemented a CLSI circulation system on a PDP 11/70
- Mid-late 1980s: helped automate UC Berkeley, brought attention to the Internet
You must read the water to know the route

- Look for trends
- Monitor blogs
- Keep up with the literature (and not just library literature)
A little fear can be a good thing

- It focuses your attention
- It motivates you
Action dispels fear

- The anticipation of an event is usually worse than the event itself
- If you're afraid of something, get busy
A miss is as good as a mile

- In the end, what matters is results, not how close you were to failing
- Learn from it and do better next time
Don’t take risks you don’t understand

- A little knowledge can be dangerous
- To understand a risk you must know:
  - what is at risk
  - what might happen
  - how likely it is to happen
An ounce of finesse is worth a pound of force

- Line up support
- Anticipate and prepare for objections
- Acknowledge and address problems
Keep your priorities straight — it’s the customer, stupid!

- Don’t make decisions based on what is easiest for you
- Don’t expect your users to look at things the same way you do
- Use your services like they would
- Talk to them!
Once you’ve done it, they can’t tell you that you can’t

- Be opportunistic
- Take (calculated) risks
- Better to beg forgiveness than ask for permission
Sometimes you must
get your tail in gear or
lose it

- Watch out for critical action points
  — the times when inaction will lead to
  failure
- At those times, give it everything
  you’ve got
Paddle together or don’t paddle at all

- Strive to work effectively with those on your team
- If you don’t want to play the game, take yourself off the team
Always rig for a flip

- A disaster can happen when you least expect it
- Envisioning a disaster can help you prepare for it
Anything worth doing is worth doing with a sense of humor

- Don’t take yourself too seriously
- Humor, carefully applied, is the grease of human relations -- it can prevent friction and smooth the way
- If you’re not having fun, you’re doing it wrong!
The world doesn’t care, it just is

- You are less important than you think
- Cultivate a sense of perspective
Sometimes decisiveness is more important than the decision itself

- Some situations have several right answers, but what is most important is making the decision & getting on with it
- Not making a decision is itself a decision

I Know This Much is True

- Neither an early adopter nor latecomer be
- Don't expect users to know what they want until they see it
- Never underestimate the power of a prototype
- Back it up or kiss it goodbye
- Buy hardware at the last possible moment
I Know This Much is True

- Don’t buy software with a zero at the end of the release number
- Disk space is cheaper than dirt
- If you can’t be with the operating system you love, love the one you’re with

What We Must Do: Collectively

- Create and facilitate change — both in ourselves and our organizations
- Reward innovators and punish loiterers
- Invest in people
- Invest in infrastructure
- Use the best people for the job
- Use technology to create more efficient ways to work
What We Must Do: Individually

- Learn as we breathe
- Make strategic learning decisions
- Say it simply
- Strive for flexibility; learn to thrive on uncertainty
- Share our ideas; build prototypes
- Take risks
- Move faster than the organization!

“Anyone who remains calm in the midst of all this confusion, simply does not understand the situation.”