

Current Comments

Beverly Bartolomeo
and 20 Years of *Current Contents*

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In July 1958, I placed an ad for a secretary in the Philadelphia newspapers. It was time for Eugene Garfield Associates, as ISI[®] was then called, to hire its first full-time employee. I had just started publishing a current awareness service under the title *Current Contents*[®] / *Pharmaco-Medical & Life Sciences*. I was also working under contract to Bell Laboratories to produce a service called *Survey of Current Management Literature*, the precursor of *Current Contents/Social & Behavioral Sciences*.¹ My office was located in a broken-down tenement at 1523 Spring Garden Street in Philadelphia. That location had been selected because it was across the street from Smith, Kline and French Labs, where I still worked part-time as a consultant in pharmaceutical documentation.

In answer to my ad, the Pennsylvania State Employment Agency sent Beverly Bartolomeo, a young woman just out of high school, whom I interviewed and hired immediately. Beverly and I just celebrated our 20th anniversary together. We had dinner at a quiet and elegant French restaurant and reminisced about the old days.

Beverly, who is now Director of *Current Contents*, has a very good memory of those early days — much better than mine.

I can imagine what Beverly's first impression must have been as she and her father arrived at that shabby looking building with its freshly painted red door. Beverly remembers that her father had arranged to drop her off for the interview on his way to work that day. But when he pulled up in front of the three-story ghetto building, he decided to wait for her. Beverly, however, was intrepid. She had been advised by a high school teacher to look for a job with a new company with potential so she could grow with that company. ISI was indeed a new company, but perhaps a little newer than her teacher had in mind.

In those first few years Beverly did a little of everything. She logged in the journals, pasted up the contents pages, and performed secretarial and bookkeeping duties. Since there was no maintenance crew, Beverly's job also included sweeping the floor and cleaning the bathroom.

In time I needed someone to perform secretarial duties full-time. Before I hired another employee I

gave Beverly the choice: become my full-time secretary or continue to work on *Current Contents*. Of course she chose the latter and has remained effectively *CC*®'s managing editor.²

Beverly has reminded me that when I interviewed applicants for secretarial jobs in those days, I used real correspondence. When letters were typed, I wrote in corrections and sent them out. You could get quite a few letters out that way, even if they weren't perfect. In fact, I found most people appreciated a letter that had the personal touch of handwritten corrections.

In those early days Beverly had to overcome the obstacles of out-of-date office equipment, poor facilities, and inadequate help. We had not yet discovered the straight-edge, so Beverly "eyeballed" the contents pages she had pasted up. Since we had no camera or photocopy machine, she had to give elaborate instructions to the printer. This was especially the case for journals that had the text of their tables of contents on both sides of the cover or used odd color combinations. When the issue was ready, the printer would deliver the "blueline" proof to her apartment at 10 p.m. Then she could make sure he had followed her instructions correctly.

Back at the office we contended with such "amenities" as an unreliable furnace. When it occasionally broke down, we sat around in sweaters and mufflers. Sometimes it actually got too cold to work.



Beverly Bartolomeo

Beverly and I share a common cultural heritage: her father is Italian and her mother, Jewish. I don't remember if I discovered this during her employment interview, but it probably accounts for a special comprehension of each other we shared almost immediately.

As my close co-worker for many years, Beverly has naturally been exposed to some of my family problems. One day in 1960, Beverly, my brother Ralph (who was then working at ISI), and I were all working late. So we decided to take Beverly out to a late dinner. At the same time, I was very upset because my son Stefan had not shown up at school that day. It was not the first time he played hooky. Since no one could find him, I contemplated calling the police. Bev and Ralph convinced me to wait. When we walked to my car, we found Stefan hiding in the back seat. Being the strict disciplinarian that I am, I took him along to the restaurant.

Beverly giggled all night as I kept reminding Stefan that the dinner was a treat for *Beverly* and not meant to reward *him* for his disruptive and outrageous behavior.

As ISI grew, Beverly's career blossomed. As we added new products and services, Beverly was charged with the responsibility of managing many of them. For example, when we began our *Original Article Tear Sheet (OATS®)* service, it was under her direction. That service is now handled by an entire department. Journal acquisition, one of Beverly's initial jobs when she joined the company, is also now handled by an entire department.

Inevitably Beverly became a supervisor. First we needed one additional paste-up artist, then two and now ten. Beverly later rose to manager. Now she is the director of *Current Contents* with 28 people reporting to her. She is ultimately responsible for all six — seven in 1979 — editions of *Current Contents*. She also coordinates the activities of her department with those of the computer, data entry, and other departments of the company. While the computer is very important at ISI, it takes people

like Beverly to make sure it is used effectively.

As part of her job, Beverly must judge which journals use space efficiently and if or how they should be photocomposed rather than photographed. She maintains excellent and important relations with our printer. The production of *CC* involves an amazing amount of detail.³ It is performed under constant pressure of weekly and daily deadlines. There are of course separate but integrated deadlines for the weekly subject indexes, the address directories, Press Digest, and other *CC* features.

In many ways Beverly's professional development parallels the development of the company over the past 20 years. As the company grew, the complexities of management also increased. Beverly was able to do much better than merely cope. She provided effective management and guidance to others. I like to think that her success is an important "role model" for other ISI employees. When I consider how much Beverly Bartolomeo has changed, I can only look forward to the next twenty years with the greatest sense of exciting anticipation. Happy anniversary, Beverly!

REFERENCES

1. **Lazerow S.** Institute for Scientific Information. In: *Encyclopedia of library and information science*. (A. Kent et al. eds) New York: Marcel Dekker, 1974 Vol. 12 p. 89-97.*
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3. -----, In recognition of journals which prove that change is possible. *Current Contents* (19):5-10, 8 May 1978.

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