

Meet the Editor

bq: The Quintessential Searcher

by LAUREE PADGETT

It's hard to imagine that many people within the library and information fields don't know what the initials "bq" stand for: Barbara Quint.



Lauree Padgett

Consequently, as I kick off my new column for 2009, bq seems to be the obvious choice for my first interview. Not only is bq a powerhouse concerning all matters search-related, she's the only ITI editor I still work with on a monthly basis. So while I'll mostly let bq speak for herself, I'll also share a few tidbits about her that I've picked up during our 16-plus years of working together.

Getting Her Start

Searcher: The Magazine for Database Professionals debuted midyear 1993, premiering at the National Online Meeting in New York. bq had been the editor of *Database Searcher* until its demise. That's when *Searcher* came into being. As bq remembers, "Alan Meckler [publisher of Meckler] decided to take his company in another direction. But within 48 hours of *Database Searcher's* demise, Tom Hogan, head of Information Today, Inc., and I had started talks about *Searcher*."

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Prior to the birth of her editing career (aka her "previous life"), bq spent 2 decades as a working librarian for the RAND Corp. She joined the librarian work force with a B.A. in history and an M.L.S., both earned from the now-defunct Immaculate Heart College. And since her high school is also gone, she says, "[M]y documentable education is now reduced to 8th grade."

Along with her *Searcher* duties, bq writes a monthly column for *IT*—Up Front With Barbara Quint—which I'm sure most of you read word for word. (And if you don't, you should, if not for the wisdom she imparts, at least for her clever turn of phrase.) For the past 10 years, bq has also



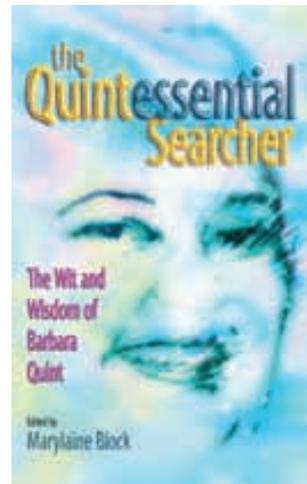
been writing InfoToday.com NewsBreaks every few weeks, which she calls "the most strenuous and probably most invigorating writing task for me." She is also a member of SLA, ALA, and AIIP (the Association of Independent Information Professionals).

What Searcher Is

When asked for a brief description of *Searcher*, bq obliged: "Ten times a year, *Searcher's* readers—librarians and information industry professionals—read a mix of practical, hands-on advice on key sources and key tools along with overviews and commentary on key issues affecting our field. The advice extends from columns on open web sources, commercial pay-for-use services, hardware and software used by info pros, legal issues, etc. Articles cover the full gamut of issues in the field." Quite modestly, she says, "And to cap it all off, there's my own opinionated column, *Searcher's* Voice, now available in podcast form for masochists everywhere."

And what sets her publication apart from ITI's other periodicals? "Me. I love my readers," she says. "I love librarians and info pros wherever they work. I want

them to work well, to succeed, and to always look sharp and on top of things." As the editor of *Searcher*, bq sees her mission as making sure that no one who reads her publication "will ever look like a deer caught in the headlights on the Information Superhighway." (Didn't I say she could turn a phrase?)



Searcher already has a few hot topics lined up for 2009, in addition to its regular columns: "the indefatigable" Irene McDermott's Internet Express, which covers everything about open web resources; Web Wise Ways, which looks at commercial sources; Tools of the Trade, which focuses on hardware and software options; the self-explanatory Publishing Trends; Sidebar, which keeps readers up-to-date on legal and copyright issues; Webmaster, which includes interviews and reviews of "provocative" websites; and Both Sides Now, which reports on European and international searcher developments.

Says bq: "We're starting off the 2009 editorial year with two new major series—one on negotiation issues and techniques, the other on 'U-Content,' or the realities of submitting content to key user-generated content services. We also have some far-reaching articles coming on where and when and how the next generation of technology will reach us." And if it goes as designed, bq also expects that the opening of Google Book Search's content under the proposed settlement agreement may become a tipping point for libraries and library users. "Got my eye on that one!" she says. "One eye only though. The other is scanning the horizon."

What keeps bq awake at night? "The poor economy is the greatest worry," she says. "The traditional information industry and library profession are already in turmoil. Putting them both under economic pressure could have very unfortunate consequences." That said, bq actually sees a bright side: "Turmoil also creates an urgent demand for lifeline information. Already I've heard from freelancing information professionals that they are jammed with client requests."

Favorite People

As for a hero within the industry, bq singled out Eugenie Prime, the retired head librarian of HP. "We were sitting together centuries ago at a meeting held by the Information Industry Association (now the Software and Information Industry Association)," says bq. "She was there as a database producer, having originated the CINAHL nursing database while heading a hospital library. Some vendor rep was waxing lyrical about how the new technology was going to answer every need, every want, every dream. She leaned over to me and whispered, 'They're not going to give us everything we want. They're going to give us what they've got a lot of.'" Then and there, bq knew she was her hero.

There are a few other things that bq loves: DVDs (notably old, little-known Westerns and any and all James "Rockford" Garner movies) and books. She happily admits to driving Netflix nuts: "No one can watch six DVDs in 2 days. No one! [Who] signed off on this fiend's subscription plan?" Thanks to Netflix, bq's cash flow to Amazon.com has lessened a bit. She admits that her purchases of mysteries "must run into the millions by now."

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As for other hobbies, "Who has the time?" she says. "All those books to read, those DVDs to watch, and then there's Turner Classic Movies." It's amazing she even has time to edit *Searcher* and write NewsBreaks, especially since she is ITI's self-proclaimed "round-the-clock resource. At no time, night or day, 24/7/365(6), am I never more than an outstretched arm away from a telephone."

On a personal note, I have known bq as a colleague during our many years of working on *Searcher*. Although bq may be as opinionated as they come, she's also just as fair-minded. She may disagree with your point of view, but she'll fight for your right to express it. She's also fastidious when it comes to fact-checking. She's always looking for noble causes to embrace, and if she's in your corner, count yourself lucky.

But leave it to bq to sum herself up the best by borrowing a Mae West gem, "When I'm good, I'm very, very good, but when I'm bad, I'm better."

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