

### Check the Property Lines

*The lines have fallen unto me in pleasant places. (Psalm 16:6 KJV)*

From as far back as I can remember, books and libraries have been a part of my life—my parents' reading to me, getting my first library card, pretending to be a librarian and making cards for my personal library, helping in my elementary school library, working in the library during my undergraduate days—and then graduate school and my life as a librarian in Christian higher education for over forty years now. Retirement is now on the horizon for me, and the phrase from Psalm 16: 6, “the lines have fallen unto me in pleasant places,” has been running through my head. The Common English Bible translates the verse as “the property lines have fallen beautifully for me.”

As I reflect on my career, the property lines have certainly changed significantly. Here are a few that come to mind: 1) from typewriters with special platens for holding catalog cards and all the filing that ensued to automated library systems, 2) from searching through multiple volumes of indexes to online databases including full-text, 3) from print and microforms with a little audio thrown in to print, microforms, e-books, and creating our own institutional repositories, 4) from expectations of complete silence in hard-back chairs at study tables to spaces for collaboration and engagement in addition to areas of quiet and solitude, and 5) from no food and drink in the library to cafes where students and faculty mingle to share ideas and have discussions over a cup of coffee. It truly is a very different environment. We have pushed the boundaries!

While there have been significant changes, some things have stayed pretty much the same: 1) we work in institutions that honor God and seek to educate individuals for service in His Kingdom; 2) we mentor students, staff and other librarians in a variety of ways; 3) we struggle to meet the curricular support that faculty and students expect with funds that could always be more; 4) we create policies and procedures to help us work efficiently; and 5) we wish students would learn early on that librarians can be their best friends and help them succeed. The foundation remains solid!

From the first ACL conference I attended in 1977, this organization has been a constant for me. I have made lifelong friendships through ACL. This has been a group to which I have taken questions, prayer requests, and praises. Professional development opportunities have helped me learn how to keep up and work well within our ever changing world.

When the difficult decisions need to be made or change is happening too fast, it isn't always easy to appreciate the property lines. I would encourage you to pause, reflect for a few moments on your work and its impact on His kingdom. I trust you too will be able to say with the Psalmist and with me that “the property lines have fallen beautifully.”



—Sharon Bull  
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