

Editorial: Turn, Turn, Turn...

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I am overlooking a rather panoramic vista, as I jot down the first notes that will eventually become this issue's guest editorial. The landscape of Western New York is a blaze of colors -- bright reds and oranges from the abundance of sugar maples, crimson from the sumacs, warmer hues of browns from the oaks, yellows from the beeches and birches. The scene is like that of stained glass windows in a cathedral of autumnal splendor. The image evokes the existence of a truly great Creator. With such a setting and inspiration my thoughts drifted to the words in the Old Testament "For everything there is a season, and a time for everything under heaven" (Ecclesiastes 3:1). This essay addresses fourteen pairs of life activities. Each element of each pair can be done only independent of the other. They appear to contradict each other. Together they represent a continuum. So, as the Preacher wrote thousands of years ago, our lives are subject to change.

Common wisdom holds that change is the one constant in our lives: things will change. These days we are certainly reminded of the word change whenever we look at our children, read the newspaper, talk to a colleague, attend a professional meeting. The reminders all point to a single dramatic conclusion: we can no longer rely on what used to work in the past and that all aspects of our lives are becoming more unpredictable. I would venture a bold idea and suggest that change itself is changing at a rate faster than ever before, and that most of us have experienced aspects of our lives in simpler times.

Newspaper headlines, news magazine covers, nightly news broadcasts and weather reports have dramatically brought a new Spanish phrase into our collective lexicon, El Nino, to remind us of the impacts that we might expect from changing climates. The Third Conference of the Parties (COP-3) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change convenes in Kyoto, Japan, December 1-10, 1997. This major gathering of international environmental policymakers may be the most important international conference on the environment, surpassing the importance of the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. The ramification of policies discussed and potentially implemented at the Kyoto

Conference may require us all to make substantial changes in our life styles. Changes that will require all citizens of the planet Earth to examine the global impacts of our daily lives.

Other areas of environmental change have likewise been in the news of late, as international environmental and conservation organizations have had to reduce their staffs, services, and publications to stave off complete collapse. The causes of these changes are complex and controversial, just as the environmental issues they have struggled to advocate.

Recent headlines in too many local papers continue to report on the social phenomenon of the 1990s: corporate downsizing, re-engineering, right-sizing, out-sourcing, strategic realignment. These are the new buzzwords describing the changes that are taking place in the workplace, from small businesses to large corporations, from public to special libraries, from research facilities to national and international environmental groups. Hardly any private or public organization has been immune to these factors. Shrinking workforces, soaring executive salaries, diminished services and surging stock markets seem as juxtaposed as the Ecclesiastes fourteen pairs of life's activities.

These socio-economic and socio-political forces tearing at the fiber of the work place have taken a particularly hard toll on many of the positions found in the soft underbellies of businesses, organizations, and institutions: the divisions, sections, and groups serving as stewards for information and communication. This element of change provides tremendous challenges and begs us to stimulate our most creative talents to assure that the essence of information and communication is not lost along the paths of change.

Today's effective librarian and information professional must embrace creativity as the primary tool to manage change in their lives. Creativity fosters a sense of entrepreneurship (and intra-preneurship!), innovation, and newness as means to control the changes we face. We will find our role as risk-takers will be stimulated and sustained by the changes we encounter and the changes we create. We should look at change as a means to find and develop new means of effective, efficient, and equitable access to information. Technological innovations and changes will be the driving forces behind our future changes. We should look at change as an opportunity to improve our services, products, publications, and our profession.

Tribute to John Denver

This is written with a profound sense of loss at the October 12th of 1997, death of singer, songwriter, actor, and environmental activist, John Denver. Denver was killed when an experimental aircraft he was flying crashed into Monterey Bay in California.

I actually had the opportunity of meeting him in 1969, when he was launching his career as a single performer. One of the more popular circuits frequented by many performers was the State University of New York Coffee Houses. I remember watching some of his early performances at the SUNY College at Oneonta, the neighboring campus of my undergraduate alma mater, Hartwick College, in Oneonta, New York. I doubt that he had as vivid a memory of our meeting as I do! Over the next 28 years I had the opportunity of seeing him perform at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center, the Finger Lakes Performing Arts Center, the Rochester War Memorial, and Thompson Bolling Arena at the University of Tennessee.

John Denver's songs brought us rays of hope and sunshine, moments of peacefulness and calmness, times of exuberance and reflection. During the turbulent times of the late 60s and early 70s, John Denver brought to us a music that was wholesome and positive. Even during his later years of personal problems and the darker days of his life, he continued to inspire and entertain. He simply proved that like the rest of us, he was a simple human being, capable of making mistakes, subject to living a less-than-perfect life, able to be hurt, and, like the rest of us, he was also capable of inspiring and mending the human spirit.

Next to his musical talents, John Denver was a devout advocate for a better and more peaceful world. Many of his songs were about the environment and were compassionately written because of his strong feelings about nature and the surroundings identified best by his songs "Rocky Mountain High," "Calypso," and "Take Me Home, Country Road."

Several years after I met John Denver in the SUNY College at Oneonta Coffee House, he established the Windstar Foundation, serving as its President until his tragic death. The Windstar Foundation was created in 1975 and officially established in 1976. Located in the Central Colorado Rocky Mountains on a 1,000 acre tract of breath-taking landscape, the foundation has sought to inform citizens about the need for maintaining an ethic for the the environment. After ten years of hosting the educational "Choices for the Future" series of symposia, the Board Of Trustees recently decided to focus Windstar's energies in new areas,

including the exciting prospects of the Windstar Land Conservancy.

Since its inception, the Windstar Foundation has sought to "create opportunities for individuals to acquire the knowledge, skills, experiences, and commitment necessary to build a healthy and sustainable future for humanity." To accomplish this task, the foundation publicizes steps that individuals can take to improve environmental quality. It also conducts environmental and nature education programs in global resource management, food production technologies, and further stimulates and sustains the development of the human spirit by fostering an awareness and appreciation of the beauties and bounties of nature and the environment.

For those of you who may want to make a tribute to John Denver's efforts to make us more aware about environment, please consider a memorial gift to the Windstar Foundation. "Now that John Denver is 'Rocky Mountain High,' he can 'Thank God he is a Country Boy' in person."

Contributions can be made to:

The Windstar Foundation
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Snowmass, CO 81654 USA

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