



## Library Discovery Circa 1974

Our ongoing project to digitize back issues of *Information Technology and Libraries (ITAL)* and its predecessor, *Journal of Library Automation (JOLA)*, provides frequent reminders of what's changed (and what hasn't) in library technology in the past several decades. The image above is from a 1974 advertisement in *JOLA* for the "ROM II Book Catalog on Microfilm" from Information Design in Menlo Park, CA. The ad copy speaks for itself:

*All the advantages of a printed book catalog...None of the disadvantages. Your staff and patrons can use the catalog simultaneously in many different locations. The user can scan a number of related titles on the same page, in contrast to the one-at-a-time viewing of catalog cards in trays. Manual filing routines and maintenance are eliminated.*

*Easy to use...requires no instruction. An automatic index pointer shows your patron his position in the file. At the touch of a button he can scan forward or back at high speed. Average look-up time is about twelve seconds. A staff member can insert an updated catalog totally cumulated on a single reel of microfilm in about one minute. Your patrons never touch the film—your complete library catalog "Locked-in"!*

---

**Bob Gerrity** ([r.gerrity@uq.edu.au](mailto:r.gerrity@uq.edu.au)) is University Librarian, University of Queensland, Australia.

---

My favorite bit is the sign on the front of the machine, proudly proclaiming:

**THESE ARE ALL THE BOOKS IN THE LIBRARY.**

This month's issue of *ITAL* looks at the current state of library discovery from a number of angles. Will Owen and Sarah Michalak describe efforts at UNC Chapel Hill and partners within the Triangle Research Libraries Network to enhance the utility of the library catalog as a core tool for research, taking advantage of web-based search technologies while retaining many of the unique attributes of the traditional catalog. Joseph Deodato provides a useful step-by-step guide to evaluating web-scale discovery services for libraries. David Nelson and Linda Turney analyze faceted navigation capabilities in library discovery systems and offer suggestions for improving their usefulness and potential. Julia Bauder and Emma Lange describe a new approach to subject searching, using an interactive, visual approach. Yan Quan Liu and Sarah Briggs report on the current state of mobile services among the top 100 US university libraries. Unrelated to discovery but certainly relevant to issues around library provision of access to information, Jill Ellern, Robin Hitch, and Mark Stoffan report on user authentication policies and practices at academic libraries in North Carolina.