

## Memorial: Marla J. Schwartz (1949–2005)\*



¶1 It was easy to forget that Marla had ovarian cancer. At the end of most days, we would sit in my office and laugh about people and life. She amazed us all with her tenacity and inner strength; Marla rarely burdened us with what must have always been on her mind, the dreaded disease. And she looked so great in that beautiful wig.

¶2 Marla Schwartz was head of acquisitions and technical systems, and a tenured member of the law library faculty, at the Pence Law Library at American University. Before coming to AU in 1988, she worked at several other libraries in the D.C. area. She was a serials librarian at the main campus libraries of George Washington and George Mason universities. She also worked in technical services at the Urban Institute and as a cataloger at the U.S. Government Printing Office.

¶3 Marla was a librarian's librarian. She was active in professional organizations, serving as a board member at large for AALL's Online Bibliographic Services Special Interest Section and as chair of the Serials Section of ALA's Association for Library Collections and Technical Services (ALCTS). At the local level, Marla served as treasurer of the Law Librarians' Society of Washington, D.C. (LLSDC), and president of LLSDC's Academic Special Interest Section. She was a member of the Board of Directors for the D.C. Library Association and chair of its Technical Services Interest Group. In addition, Marla chaired and was a member of many committees in various professional organizations.

¶4 To honor Marla's many professional contributions, the Technical Services Special Interest Section of AALL has established a grant to honor her memory and achievements. The purpose of this grant is to enhance the professional development of technical services law librarians new to the field, to enable them to participate in the work of AALL and to begin to build professional networks.

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¶5 Marla was so well-known in the D.C. library world because of her active participation in local library organizations that, without fail, colleagues from all sorts of libraries would greet her as an old friend at the receptions and other events we often attended together. Adeen Postar said one of the reasons she was so excited to join the Pence Law Library as deputy director in 2004 was because Marla worked there.

¶6 But Marla lived a full personal life as well. She grew up in northwest Washington, D.C., a city she loved. Billie Jo Kaufman, associate dean of library and information services at the Pence Law Library, said that it was Marla's stories of growing up in DC that made her appreciate Washington as more than just the nation's capitol, more than a tourist mecca. It was a town with real people, too.

¶7 As a teenager, Marla worked in her father's camera store. Her father was apparently known as an electronics buff; Marla's family had numerous televisions in the mid-1950s, when few households had even one. She said the local television stations would sometimes call the house in those days to ask her father if their broadcast picture was being received clearly.

¶8 Marla left Washington to attend Boston University and Simmons College, where she earned an M.S. in library science. She loved Boston but missed Washington and her family, and so she returned to begin her career in librarianship. Marla eventually met and married Howard Morrison in 1980. A few years later, while working at George Washington University's main campus library, Marla earned an M. Phil. in American civilization from GWU.

¶9 In 1988, Marla went to work for the Washington College of Law Library at American University as the associate law librarian for serials. She became head of the Acquisitions and Serials Department in 1990 (eventually Acquisitions and Technical Systems) and a tenured member of the law library faculty in 1992. She was a significant player at the library, chairing the library's Collection Development Committee and the library faculty's Rank and Tenure Committee. In meetings, Marla's low-key yet knowledgeable tone was a valuable counterpoint to other, more talkative colleagues. We all respected the extensive experience she brought to the table.

¶10 We also admired Marla for her stoic courage as she faced her cancer. Sima Mirkin, catalog librarian at the Pence Law Library, remembers her positive outlook on life, right up to the end. She was impressed with how Marla would take the stairs, instead of the elevator, and how she never felt sorry for herself. Instead, Sima remembers, Marla's laughter remained as infectious as ever.

¶11 When it became apparent to Marla's colleagues and friends that she did not have long to live, they descended on her in the hospice. Many, many people called her bedside phone; others hopped on airplanes and flew in to see her one more time. Her last few weeks were full of visits from colleagues and old friends. Marla was moved by the outpouring of love and friendship. She said she had not realized the affection so many felt for her.

¶12 For many years, Marla and Howard vacationed in Maine every summer. Marla loved the escape of Maine; she had beautiful photos and calendars of Maine in her office. After the cancer changed her life, they continued to visit Maine every August. Marla could breathe in the fresh sea air, relax with a good book or crossword puzzle, and forget for awhile.

¶13 As she lay in her hospice bed, Marla looked at her Maine photos over and over again. She seemed transported by the memories, and at peace. Marla died on August 8, 2005, just a few days before they were to have returned to Maine.—*Susan Lewis-Somers*<sup>1</sup>

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