

## AUTOMATION FOR THE SMALL LIBRARY

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In today's modern world there is no reason for even the smallest of libraries not to take advantage of electronic wizardry to make day-to-day tasks much more simple and effective. I realize, of course, that budgets are "tight" and that it is highly impractical for small to medium size public libraries to buy a mini-marc system or to join the ranks of OCLC users; but, one thing that is within our grasp is the IBM Electronic 60 typewriter.

A basic typewriter is an essential piece of equipment in any library. Sooner or later the old Royal that some civic-minded business man threw away in your direction is going to break down, and you will be faced with the need to purchase a new one. I suggest that if you are going to spend eight or nine hundred dollars on a typewriter anyway, why not invest an extra three to four hundred dollars and get a typewriter with a memory that will greatly expand the ability of your staff to perform better quality and quantity of work. I suggest that even if you do not need a new typewriter the IBM Electronic 60 is worth your investment. If you are on a tight budget the machine can be financed for as little as one hundred dollars a month.

The typewriter in itself is a real marvel in the business world. It has the capability of storing frequently-used words, phrases, paragraphs, or sentences. In addition, it has automatic carrier return and automatic formatting, such as, centering words and continuous underscore, indent, column layout, and four different margin settings that can be remembered. When you add to this a special library keyboard, a library typing element, and a card carrying platen you have a real wonder machine that is an answer to your prayers.

The most obvious use of this typewriter, and the major reason that I bought one for our library, is for producing catalog cards on books processed in-house. In this aspect it has worked beautifully. Just imagine having the ability to type a catalog card only once and then at the press of a button having as many copies of the card as required in a neatly typed format, unlike messy printed cards that were popularly used in the past. All one needs to do to complete the set of cards for a title is to type the subject or title at the top of the appropriate card; this can be done when the typewriter is finished printing out the memory to avoid the need to reinsert the card into the machine. If your typist is creative, he can also generate the spine label, circulation card, and book pocket by storing the various elements of the card in different parts of the memory where they may be recalled separately.

Soon after we received the machine, I discovered that it could also be an invaluable aid to us at the circulation desk in sending out overdue notices. Using regular prestamped postal cards, we would type across the top FIRST NOTICE. Then leaving suitable space for name and address, a message such as, "Our records indicate that the following listed materials have been drawn on your library card and not been returned. Please return these items so that others may use them," would appear. This would be followed by open space for the listing of materials; the card was completed with the name of the library. With all of this stored in the memory, it is then a very simple operation to insert a new post card and type in the name and address of the borrower and the list of materials borrowed in the appropriate spaces. These items are also placed in a separate section of the memory so that they may be typed on the back of a catalog card that was previously destined for the wastebasket to create a file of patrons with overdue books at the same time we send out the first notice. The memory of the typewriter does have its limits, so that once the card for the file is created you erase the name, the address, and books borrowed and go on to the next patron having overdue materials.

Using the file created we are then able to send second notices and invoices to the patron, using the typewriter in a similar format. An important step is to be sure to pull names out of the file of delinquent borrowers when the items are returned.

Another area where the Electronic 60 has proved itself to be of value is in better written communications. Now when I want to send a letter to each of my board members, I need to type the letter only once leaving adequate space for the address. Then when I go back to type the address, I add that to a section of the memory; by having a second margin set in the memory, I am ready to type the envelopes with ease and efficiency. This feature can be used anytime you want to send letter to a select group. We also used the machine for generating mailing labels prior to our acquisition of a copier that would handle sheets of labels.

As you can well imagine the letter-generating aspect of the typewriter was used effectively in lobbying efforts to our state and county governing bodies. No matter how good your copy machine may be, there is no substitute for a freshly-typed letter that appears to be prepared especially for the recipient.

The same application of the typewriter also was made in writing letters to prominent businesses in the area to solicit donations. In a limited time of several days, we were able to send out nearly fifty letters. Prior to owning the machine, this would have been a monumental task, taking from three to four weeks, since clerks in small libraries are usually hired on skills other than the speed of their typing. This one time promotion brought income into the library beyond the original cost of the typewriter. Increases in funds from our governing bodies

also give evidence of successful lobbying, but I would not be so narrow to say that it was because of our typewriter.

In a brief statement I have outlined some of the uses I have found for the IBM Electronic 60 typewriter. Please understand that I am not trying to sell the IBM model. It is quite possible that other companies have machines with similar functions. It is simply that this is the machine with which I am familiar.

I am sure there are many additional uses for the machine; the reader will discover these as he works with the machine. The major limiting factors are the number of characters that the machine can hold (IBM's limit is 736 characters) and the willingness and imagination of the people who operate the machine. I mention this because even the smallest efforts at automation need some ground work if people are to use it to full advantage. Even before the new machine arrives, staff members will need in-service training to learn about the capability of the machine and its potential to service the needs of the library.