When I started teaching as an assistant professor of computer science in 1984, one of my first projects was to acquire publications for a personal library, both to help me keep up with the latest and greatest and to provide resources for my students. In the good old’ days, searching for articles had nothing to do with Google—it was all about a trip to the library, so having local resources was a real plus. I read (mostly scanned) each publication on arrival and passed along pointers to colleagues and students.

When I left academia in 1992, I kept all my subscriptions, thinking that I still needed to keep up. I had colleagues and clients, and I still enjoyed sharing pointers to information I thought others would care about.

As I look at my bookshelves now, there are no periodicals; everything is online. When I recommended something interesting, I either attach a pdf or send a URL. I’ve made the transition, I either attach a pdf or send a URL. I’ve made the transition, I either attach a pdf or send a URL. I’ve made the transition.

The one constant that has made the transition with me in my evolution from academic to consultant is IEEE Software. It has evolved to be the most useful periodical in my list. I read more of its content and apply more of what I’ve read than any other publication I encounter regularly. I like the format, the authors, the staff, the whole package IEEE Software provides. I guess you could say I am a satisfied customer.

No one knows what will happen to periodicals in the future. Will they disappear completely or just morph into some new, more useful structure? Losing the tangible experience of printed material makes me sad, but I know my days of lingering over the latest periodical with a cup of tea on the side table are growing short. Ah, well, I look forward to seeing what IEEE Software has in store for the next 25 years!

Linda Rising
Independent software consultant
risingl1@cox.net

IEEE Software has played a key role in my career as a software engineer and manager. After working for a few years in software development at Bell Labs, I was put in charge of a test group. At the time, I didn’t know what software testing really meant aside from unit testing. So I started doing some research in the company library, which had a fantastic collection both online and in its physical libraries. I had started making monthly visits to a library to walk the stacks looking at new books and other things of interest. This was before the Web, so finding things online was more challenging than it is today.

At one library, browsing in the periodicals section in 1993, I came across IEEE Software. I happened to read John Musa’s just-published article on operational profiles. Although I had just read his book on reliability engineering, his Software article more clearly expanded the idea of operational profiles. This helped us apply software reliability concepts to our projects, and we dramatically increased quality and reduced test time and costs. I also got my first conference publication documenting our success, and this led to several other publishing opportunities, some with colleagues. In a way, reading that article (and Musa’s book) was the dividing point in my career. Before this, I was a programmer; afterward, I was more of an engineer and an applied researcher.

Immediately following this application of Musa’s ideas, I decided to try teaching software engineering at my alma mater, Columbia University, and did so as an adjunct for a number of years. I also went on to publish several of my own articles in IEEE Software. This not only made me feel great but also exposed me to insightful reviewers and editors as well as a large population of readers who then applied some of my ideas. I also served as a reviewer for the magazine for a few years and learned a lot by trying to make constructive comments for other authors. I still read the journal regularly although I seem to have a hard time to find that monthly visit to the library these days. It is no exaggeration that this journal has played a significant role in my career and it really goes back to that one Fall day in the Bell Labs library when I hit upon that highly sensible article.

James Cusick
Director IT, Wolters Kluwer
cj.cusick@computer.org