

Introduction

James Shedlock, Board of Directors Liaison

Of course, the origin of the Medical Library Association (MLA) cookbook occurred at a dinner, and the cookbook idea came naturally in a conversation about Dan Richards. This is my “Dan story,” and it is worth sharing because it explains so much about the intent of the board of directors and their desire to honor a close and dear friend and colleague.

The dinner in the story occurred at the first board of directors meeting after Dan’s untimely death. The dinner was held at the Printer’s Row restaurant in Chicago’s Loop and was intended to be special as the board’s way of celebrating Dan’s life. Because Dan was an avid entertainer, gourmet, and world traveler, a special evening of food, wine, and good friends in MLA seemed the natural thing to do. All who attended would agree that this is what Dan would have wanted and Dan would have done the same for many of his MLA friends. Each of us present had the opportunity to relay their favorite “Dan story,” and many there reported memorable events with Dan that invariably included eating, drinking, traveling, or good companionship.

That night I happened to sit with Jana Bradley, MLA president at the time, Dottie Eakin, Ray Naegele, Kim Pierceall, and Kate Corcoran. In our table conversation Jana brought up the agenda item from the board’s meeting prior to the dinner—that the board should establish some memorial to Dan in recognition of his personal and professional contributions to MLA. I suggested the idea of a cookbook for a number of reasons. One is that I collect them, and lately I have concentrated on acquiring cookbooks that are a little unusual and unexpected. A cookbook by the MLA membership would certainly fit that criteria.

The second reason for a MLA cookbook is based on the first. I once asked Dan in passing at a MLA annual meeting if he thought of doing a cookbook for MLA as a fund raiser. I had it in mind to help him, and if MLA published a cookbook, it would fit right into my growing collection. I distinctly remember Dan saying “Yes, I have thought of it,” and that statement convinced me that he would be the one writing this introduction instead of me. When Jana heard the idea, you could see the light bulb glow within her head. It seemed the perfect means to an end—a cookbook as a personal tribute to Dan’s interest in food and drink and entertaining. Revenue from the cookbook sales could then go towards a memorial to Dan’s professional interests: collection development in the health sciences. At the table Dottie reinforced the idea even more by suggesting members who knew Dan could contact many of his favorite restaurants

from across the country and request donations of recipes for the cookbook. Anyway we looked at the idea, it seemed a good one, and Jana urged me to introduce it at the following day's board meeting. When I did, the whole board agreed that a cookbook was the right way to start a memorial to Dan.

For many MLA members who did not know Dan or only heard of his reputation, the cookbook idea would need reinforcing. The celebration of MLA's centennial in 1998 provided the other incentive for this publishing venture. The cookbook would be a fun project to get the membership involved in celebrating MLA's one hundred years of professional service.

This then is the story behind the MLA Cookbook Project. By honoring Dan and celebrating MLA's centennial, the book's chief purpose reminds the reader to enjoy living as much as Dan did. These recipes are one means to enjoyment. And so are your friends and colleagues. Let this cookbook be a toast to Dan and his influence on MLA, a toast to MLA in celebrating its past one hundred years, and a toast to MLA's future in the next one hundred years!

