

*“What could be more central to our affection for libraries than the card catalog? Libraries are repositories of history, and the card catalog is the crucial self-published document in the history of each library. It is a big, slow, beautiful thing, built over generations by many unthanked people. It has flaws and oddities and secret strengths. Why not write about it? When I began, I merely meant to celebrate the technology of the paper database in its twilight years, since there were already innumerable people celebrating its replacement, the online catalog. I had no idea until I began calling around that libraries across the country were, right at the moment, actually throwing out the catalogs, physically destroying them. It’s one thing to denigrate an old technology and replace it with something that is faster and better in many important ways, but it’s another thing entirely to gleefully pulp the past. It’s an act of narrow-minded, imaginative hostility toward the work of the librarians who preceded you.”*

--Nicholson Baker, *Requiem for the Discarded*, *Library Journal*, May 15, 1996