

# Case Study

Number 13 - Library Periodicals

13

## The Customer

*Morris County Library  
Whippany, NJ*

## What Was Found

In 1967, when the Morris County Library left cramped quarters in a New Jersey courthouse, the periodical section required drastic changes. Because the library had occupied only 8,000 square feet of space, periodicals were piled on shelves or boxed on the floor. Realizing that a solution had to be found, Director Ken McPherson remembered being introduced to a filing system called Oblique.

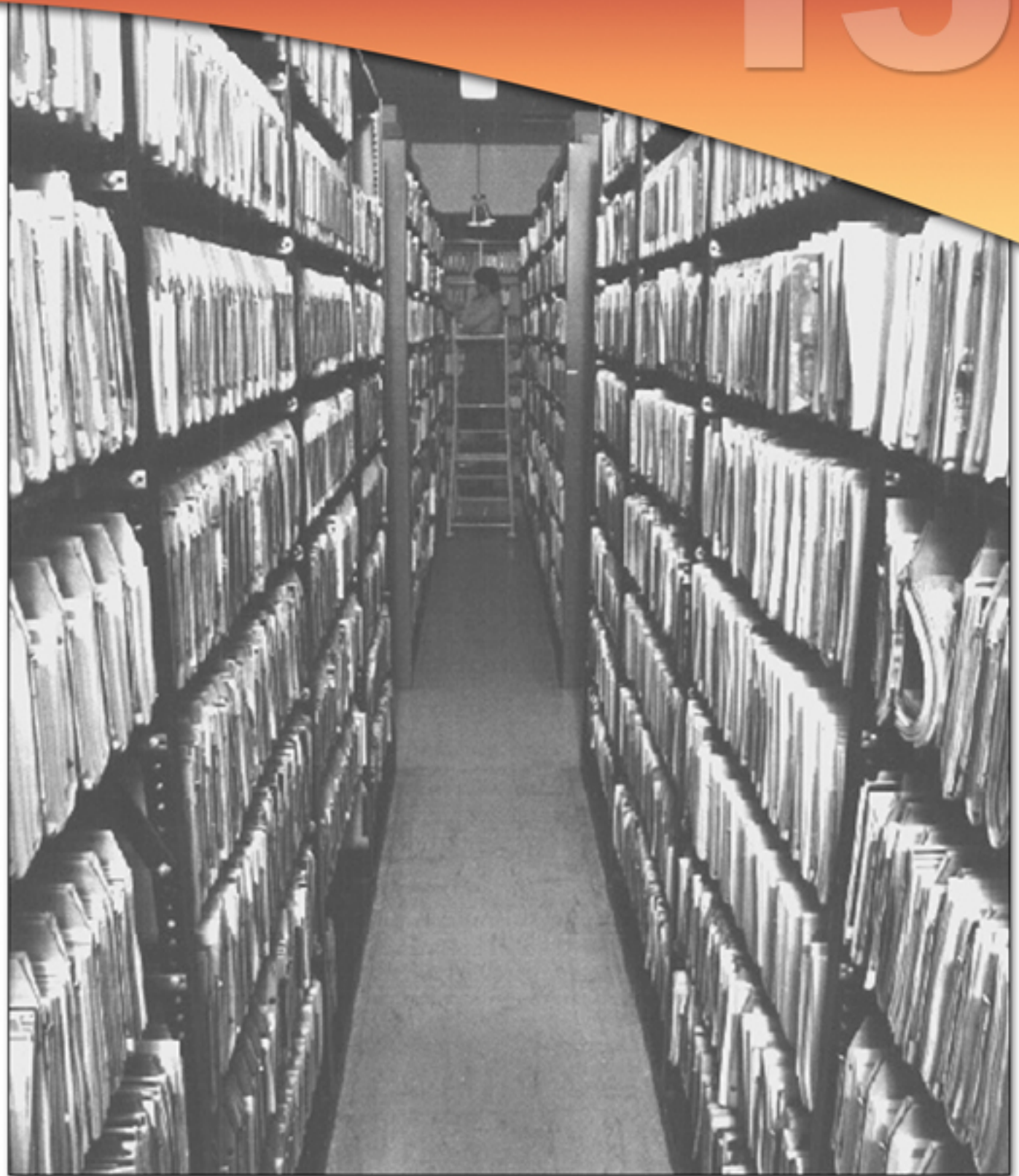
The Morris County Library differs from a number of other libraries in the way periodicals are maintained. The periodical files are not open to the public, so that when a patron requests an issue, a library assistant must retrieve the issue and sign it out.

In the old quarters, under the system of boxing and piling magazines, keeping publications in sequence was almost impossible. Only one staff member was really familiar with the files at that time, and all other personnel had to depend on that individual to retrieve materials.

But Director McPherson felt that keeping access to the periodicals limited to the staff was the only way to have complete control of the titles in the files. This policy definitely reduced misfiles and lost issues. Additionally, the library used microfilm sparingly, limiting the expensive practice to two or three dozen titles.

## What Was Done...

Recalling the Oblique folders from a library convention demonstration McPherson contacted Oblique's distributor in New Jersey. They sized up the facility's needs and handled the entire installation. Soon the library had a 105" high steel shelving with



steel rail assemblies to support the Oblique folders. The messy piles of magazines that once were scattered in disarray now fit into nine aisles of six units each, and ascend eight rows in height. Color-Keyed Indexing™ was used to index periodicals by

title and year.

What had been an organizational nightmare for the library became the perfect system to meet patrons' needs.

As a backup reference library to over 400,000 local residents, Morris



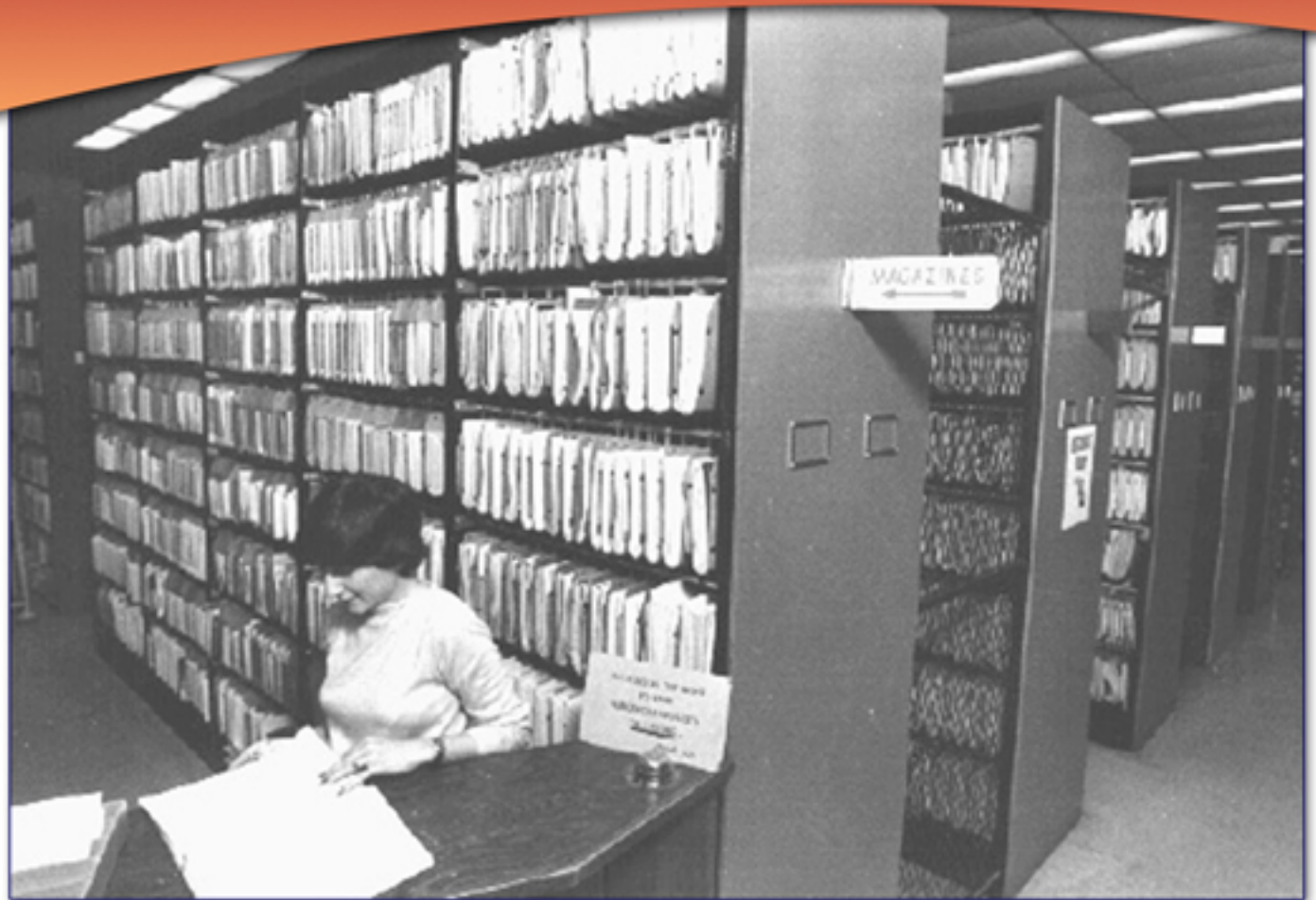


County averages 65,000 retrievals and refills per year. Organization and accessibility are essential, particularly when the number of available staff members is considered.

Linda Ott, Head of the Reference Department, elaborates, "We have at present two full time assistants and four part time students working nights and Saturdays. This system has helped us stabilize the staff. Fewer staff are needed to satisfy more people. Our system wouldn't work if you had to have someone handle periodicals that are bound in hardback and stacked on shelves. Bound volumes are bulky and heavy to handle, and more space is needed to allow for the thickness of these volumes."

With the Oblique installation came an improved method of filling patron requests. If periodicals were bound, one patron need to take a whole year's worth of issues just to see the one they wanted. With Oblique, single issues could be retrieved easily without one patron taking an entire collection.

Director McPherson estimates that "the department's efficiency and ability to meet patron needs has been improved 100%." He explains that substantial space has been saved by maximizing shelf space, and by the ability to file eight rows high. Yet even at that height, the magazines are still convenient due to the visibility of Oblique's individual labels. Magazines can be located and retrieved



in a moment. If the old boxes were used at these same heights, obtaining a file safely and quickly would simply not be feasible.

The library anticipates increasing the use of microfilm only for older issues as space runs out. McPherson believes that, "people prefer to use hard copy."

Oblique definitely solved a retrieval and filing problem for the Morris County Library, and at the same time, has allowed the facility to preserve their proven service policy in the reference room.

With staff members still obtaining the magazines for patrons, McPherson comments that even though, "The magazines are not open to the public, we feel we're offering a better service to the public with fast retrieval and 95% assurance that the magazines needed will be available."

With around 200 requests per day at the facility, Oblique folders have helped increased the efficiency of personnel who retrieve periodicals. Now a number of staff members are able to provide what once could only be handled by one person.

#### **Epilogue-2002**

After over 30 years, Morris County Library is still depending on Oblique to help manage their periodicals collection. Many of the original compartments are still in use and they are ordering additional compartments. Today, not many products can boast a thirty year history with a customer. Across the United States, customers like Morris County have continued to enjoy the benefits of Oblique's organization, indexing, and space-saving year after year. What more can we say?