

The Ditto Machine Sign

During 1963-1966, I worked for the State of Ohio Department of Education, Division of Guidance and Testing as an Assistant State Supervisor. The Division Director was John Odgers, a real gentleman with very high standards. He was so precise that he wanted us to let him review any correspondence we had with Superintendents throughout the state...and would frequently add suggestions as to how we might make the correspondence clearer. He was stickler for proper grammar. We had regular meetings to insure that we were all on the same page as our job was to communicate with, and support, the schools of Ohio regarding their guidance and counseling programs. Although we had secretarial support, we usually produced our own handouts to give to the schools we were visiting. In those days,

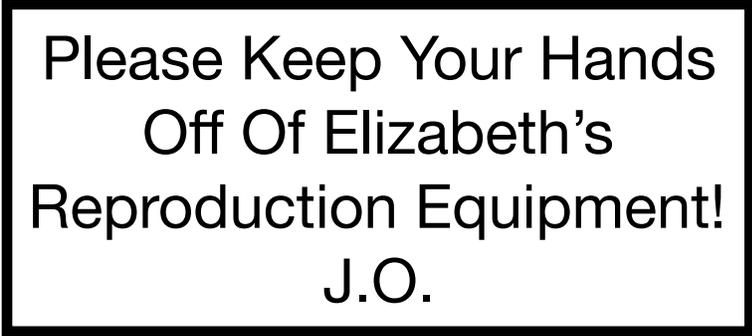


reproducing handouts required one to type a Ditto Master, a two sided affair with the second sheet being a carbon copy on special paper. The carbon was then detached from the original and affixed to the cylinder of the Ditto Machine (Spirit Fluid Duplicating Machine), which when rotated by hand, produced the number of copies desired. Fluids were automatically added to this production,

and all-in-all, it was a pretty messy operation. The clean up was time consuming and you had to be careful not to ruin your clothes with the splattering ink.

Elizabeth, Mr. Odgers' secretary, was overseer of the duplication room. She, like Mr. Odgers, was a very organized and precise, and wanted the Ditto Machine to be spotless. Elizabeth had been educated in Germany and had served as a simultaneous translator at the Neuenburg Trials following WWII. She had immigrated to the United States in the late fifties and was a delightful, but tough, woman. She had been through a lot in her life.

We young professionals were not as careful as we should have been with regard to the cleanliness of the Ditto Machine and she often complained to Mr. Odgers about our slovenly behavior. He would asked us to be more sensitive to Elizabeth's requests and finally issued a memo indicating that henceforth she would have total control over the operation and cleanliness of this machine. Several weeks later, someone (not me) made a real mess and tried to clean it up, only adding to the mess that he had already caused. Elizabeth reported this transgression to Mr. Odgers and out of frustration he posted this sign in the duplication room.



Please Keep Your Hands
Off Of Elizabeth's
Reproduction Equipment!
J.O.

Needless to say, this sign caused a few laughs, and remained in place for several days, until Elizabeth removed it and took it to Mr. Odgers. Mr. Odgers arrived at the next staff meeting, with

The Sign in hand, put it on the table and said, “As I have said over and over, “Be very careful of what and how you write as it may come back to haunt you.” We all laughed...and because of the way he handled his embarrassing moment, we all tried a little harder to keep Elizabeth’s Ditto Machine free of unwanted smudges.

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