

Letters

To the Editor:

I would like to commend Allen Veaner for his excellent "1985-1995: The Next Decade in Academic Librarianship, Part I." Clear, concise, and entertaining, the article is a model of what a working paper can be—something which stimulates thinking and provides a variety of ideas for further discussion, but is never dull or jargon-ridden. Working papers are useless if not read.

I am especially pleased with the way Veaner has approached the thorny issue of the librarian's current and future relationship with technology. Significantly, Veaner concentrates on the key issue in the debate—what is the true nature of the library profession? If we indeed define ourselves as humanists, professionals who facilitate and transfer knowledge to others, our role is much clearer than the nebulous "information broker." I am reminded of one famous definition of literature as "a human activity," echoed by Veaner's phrase, "information and knowledge are spiritual relationships among humans, mental constructs that exist in the mind. . . ."

I agree with most of Veaner's chapter, "The End of Libraries." I would suggest, however, an easy cure for the problem Veaner sees of academic librarians' alleged lack of knowledge of the issue of "user friendliness." When traveling, librarians should visit academic or public libraries and thrusting caution to the winds, pretend they are patrons. It's amazing how lost one is able to feel, for example, in a five-story academic library with no signs, people, or books in sight, simply a huge, attractive entryway with five doors leading off to the side. Or go into a large public library with a multitude of signs (with conflicting information) pasted on the door. One or two such trips should raise the librarian's consciousness about the effectiveness of his or her own library. I'm a supporter of databases, electronic retrieval, even robots if they work, but if the patrons are lost or disoriented at the front door, the rest doesn't matter. The message of all this goes along nicely with Veaner's central thesis—that for us to function effectively and creatively and adaptively we must be willing to place the human element first in thinking about our profession.

EUGENIA B. WINTER

Acquisitions Librarian/Bibliographer
California State College, Bakersfield

To the Editor:

I have just read with interest your optimistic article "1985 to 1995: The Next Decade in Academic Librarianship, Part I (C&RL May 1985). Although I am aware of the saints and scholars of Libraryland, I recognize the surfeit of the ignorant, the semi-literate, the fascinatingly confident members of our semi-profession whose idea of their personal, professional and monetary worth is sadly misplaced.

If by 1995 academic librarians suddenly appear as "marvellously expert, well-educated, and highly trained," I will know that Holy Writ must include the miracle of the ages.

I await Part II of your article.

JOHN LITMAN

To the Editor:

In response to Mr. Crowe's letter, I agree that the data he suggests would be a useful extension to a study of the productivity of librarians as a faculty group. However, my article in the July 1985 *C&RL* was meant to be simply a study of institutional productivity modeled on other such studies that have been done in fields other than librarianship. The data collected in my research seen in light of other recently published research on librarians and faculty status also allowed me to make some observations on library faculty requirements and their effect on publication productivity among librarians.

Although the 1985 article was limited to examining the questions mentioned in the preceding paragraph, I have done research in the past directly addressed to the aspect of librarian publishing in which he is interested; namely, assessing the relative productivity of librarians as a faculty group. I would refer Mr. Crowe to an earlier article of mine published in *C&RL* in September 1977, "Publication Activity Among Academic Librarians." The aim of that article was to establish norms of publishing productivity for academic librarians. The period surveyed was 1969-1970 to 1973-1974. The findings indicated that, at that time at least, only an average of about 7 percent of the library staff at the institutions surveyed published during the five years studied. It was also found that the median productivity for the total survey population of publishing librarians was two publications in five years, and that this median dropped to one publication in five years if book reviews were excluded.

The profession has changed dramatically since the first part of the 1970s and it is possible that a replication of my 1977 study might produce quite different results now. However worthwhile a replication of the 1977 study might be, it was not among my purposes in the 1985 article to produce one.

PAULA D. WATSON

Assistant Director of General Services

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

To the Editor:

I strongly recommend the reading of Dr. Samuel Rothstein's article in the April 1, 1985 *Library Journal* which is titled "Why People Really Hate Library Schools" in order to assess more reliably the direction academic librarianship is likely to take in the next decade. What interests me mainly in Rothstein's stimulating article is that he quotes extensively from a social worker's comparative study of the value systems of graduate students from different departments, including library students. I would summarize its findings briefly by saying that the library students were individualistic, reserved, self-sufficient, self-opinionated, suspicious and respectful of established ideas; versus outgoing, venturesome, trusting, adaptable, experimental and committed to intellectual inquiry (which they were not). These traits were developed to a preeminent degree both positively and negatively as compared to other graduate students. The same traits were characteristic of the library faculty except that they were more intelligent and more enlightened. It seems to me that the librarians in this sample did not possess the value systems of persons likely to be leaders in the field of information science. It is true that the library students had good academic backgrounds, but that is not enough without creativity that requires a willingness to try unorthodox solutions and to be risk takers.

I would expect that the members of a professional community with the characteristics which were revealed by this cited study would possess the traits of clannishness and anti-intellectualism. Moreover, I have been advised (University of Toronto Library School) that the reason for the establishment of the new Master of Information Science degree is that the M.L.S. holders are not good at research-oriented work and are not good at coping with science and technology. Allan Veaner mentioned in his interesting July 1985 article in *C&RL* that the twenty-four library leaders he consulted advised him that the academic libraries should only "hire the brightest and the best." However, Veaner also noted in the same article that librarians publish so little (of merit I would add), that a recent bibliography

of thirty articles on problems in the storage and retrieval of information did not include a single contribution from a librarian. I have to conclude sadly that the concept of "the brightest and the best" used by the library leaders does not include a capacity for assisting in the creation of a real research librarianship. This is also my personal experience since, of thirty-odd academic library positions I have applied for in 1985, the job advertisements of only two asked for publications and none of them requested a Ph.D., although this sample included several senior institutions. I am not optimistic concerning the future of academic librarianship. It is too conservative for its own good in my opinion.

DENIS KENNEDY

Midwest Library Service



**You won't find more
personal attention
... anywhere**

College and university librarians: We have what you're looking for. While Midwest utilizes state-of-the-art computer systems, we realize machines can't do it all. So when you want to place an order, ask a question, or discuss a problem, you can call direct on Midwest's toll-free WATS line and conduct business on a name-to-name basis with your personal customer service representative. It's the kind of attention that Midwest has provided to college and university libraries for 24 years.



Midwest Library Service

11443 St. Charles Rock Road
Bridgeton, MO 63044

Call toll-free (800) 325-8833

Missouri librarians call toll-free (800) 392-5024 Canadian librarians call collect (314) 739-3100

Faxon's Foreign Service.

The company you know and trust for domestic serials management is also your best choice for foreign titles.

The same toll free number you call for customer assistance ties you into Faxon's global network of services. We resolve your overseas claims and adjustments fast because some of the world's largest publishers are directly online with us through PUBLINX. We also offer competitive prices by paying in 21 different currencies. And with our large foreign title database, we can be the single source for all your serials.

Discover the best in international information management by enlisting Faxon's foreign service.

Call 800-225-6055 or
(617) 329-3350 collect.

faxon

*On the frontier of
information
management.*

The Faxon Company
15 Southwest Park
Westwood, MA 02090
FAXON EUROPE
Amsterdam
FAXON PACIFIC
Tokyo
FAXON CANADA
Toronto

