

Editorial

Terry Link, Library Superstar II

"In response to your *C&RL* editorial in November 1987, let me offer Terry Link as the best librarian I have yet to encounter.

"Terry is a reference librarian at Michigan State University (MSU). His knowledge of reference tools, which he readily shares with his less studious peers, is impeccable. His willingness to alter his schedule for the convenience of others is unending. His ability to *really* listen to the concerns and ideas of his colleagues and amalgamate divergent viewpoints into an agreeable course of action is stunning. His humor and patience during the most trying times are unmatched. Yet all of these qualities, so valued by the staff, seem to pale when compared to his desire to help the user.

"Indiana University's newsworthy basketball coach, Bobby Knight, once suggested that 'the will to win is the most overrated factor in the history of sports, everyone has that. It's the willingness to do what is necessary to prepare to win that separates winners from losers.'

"I think this also holds true for librarians. I have yet to meet a librarian who doesn't want to see users get what they need, but how many of them carry that commitment through every hour of the day and do what is necessary to make this happen? Terry really does. He is conscientious in his review of the reference collection. He is a voracious reader who typically has at least a rudimentary knowledge of the user's area of inquiry. In addition, Terry has conceptualized, planned, and implemented programs to meet user needs. One example is a 'current issues' file that Terry compiles to assist users in finding a variety of sources and perspectives from which to write position papers that would otherwise be drawn from mundane and routine sources.

"In short, Terry is not just 'user oriented' when he is on the desk, but rather his adherence to this philosophy is apparent in all of his activities.

"In conclusion, it is worth noting that beyond his superb efforts for the library, Terry is a devoted husband and father and still finds time to organize and engage in charitable endeavors. For example, he organizes fellow librarians for an annual housecleaning project at a local facility for the homeless.

"As a human being or just in his role as a librarian, Terry Link is as good as they come."—*Clifford H. Haka.*

After reading Cliff Haka's letter nominating Terry Link I felt the need for more information. For example, what do Terry's other colleagues think about his work and his influence, and what are Terry's thoughts about what drives him to excel? So, I called Cliff and asked him if he could send along more information, information that would give the readers of *C&RL* a better sense of Terry.

I received a letter from Lori Goetsch and the staff of the MSU Information/Reference Department as well as a letter from Terry. I think you will enjoy them.

From Lori came these words:

"We can always count on Terry to lift our spirits and see the brighter side of life and work, but he has a more serious side as well. Terry lives by a personal code that is evident in

everything he does, both at work and at home. He is our social conscience, reminding us often of our responsibilities not only to our patrons but to our families and to the world at large.

"One only has to look at the pile of newspapers in his office awaiting recycling, the boycotted newsletters he shares with us, or the adjustments he makes in his professional life to care for his children to understand Terry's high level of commitment to his beliefs. In fact, my first, memorable meeting with Terry was at an ACRL president's program where he was leafleting against TIAA-CREF's South African investments. His dedication to work, home, and society makes Terry a role model to us all.

"On the job, Terry projects this same commitment and devotion. He is knowledgeable about a wide range of topics and reference sources and is creative about trying new techniques or approaches to those hackneyed freshman research paper topics that make so many of us yawn and roll our eyes. He's patient, tolerant, and open-minded, approaching every patron's question as if it were the first time it was asked of him.

"Terry is truly one of a kind, and we count ourselves fortunate to work with him."—Lori Goetsch.

Terry writes:

"As I read your editorial announcing the call for superstar nominations, I noticed that you are looking for answers to what motivates people to excel. I can't answer that. My guess is that different factors motivate different people and there is no universal factor. I don't even think money would work for everyone.

"I can try to give you a sense of what motivates me consciously. (I assume there are things going on in my subconscious that I haven't yet resurrected to conscious levels that also motivate me.)

"My philosophy of living suggests that we only get one chance at this life and I would like to feel that when my time is over the world was a better place because I was here. I realize, or perhaps rationalize, that one doesn't solve the big problems of the world without equal efforts with the small ones. I believe that means must justify themselves. The justification cannot rely on a hoped-for ending. Furthermore, it seems to me that a cosmic energy surrounds and passes through each of us constantly. And through awareness we can direct that energy (call it spirit, karma, god, vibrations . . .) and make it a more positive force. Or we can leave it unchanged or give it more negative direction.

"I strive to make every interaction a more positive experience than when it first began. Again, I fail frequently. But failing isn't bad. Not trying is.

"I remember the hardest thing I had to learn on the job was knowing how to fail—knowing that given a limited amount of time I could not find the answer to every single question that came my way. I think most reference people probably have had the same difficulty. I guess I have chosen to be a librarian for the past ten years because I see libraries as being awareness centers where people can become aware of themselves, ideas, solutions to problems, and bits and pieces of truth. I see myself as one of those birds in Huxley's utopian *Island* who screeched 'Attention! Attention!' to the villagers to remind them to stop for a moment and see what's going on immediately around them.

"Finally, what I do is not a solo effort. I have a great family that gives me the love and strength to attend to my life's work. I have had great colleagues who know how to pitch in when the going gets tough and know how to laugh when I say something ludicrous. Hiram Bakes, a longtime librarian from Aquinas College in Grand Rapids and a colleague of mine for three years, is worthy of such a profile. His humaneness, brilliant mind, and disgusting sense of humor certainly have had a positive effect on my development. Most of all, if I'm any good at anything it's because Mom and Dad gave me the love and sense of values that have propelled me this far. I thank them all."—Terry Link.

And we thank you, Terry Link, for all the ways in which you have excelled, and for all the people that you have helped, and will help.

CHARLES MARTELL

Ed. note: Objective evidence about the excellence of your library superstar nominee will help to strengthen your case.

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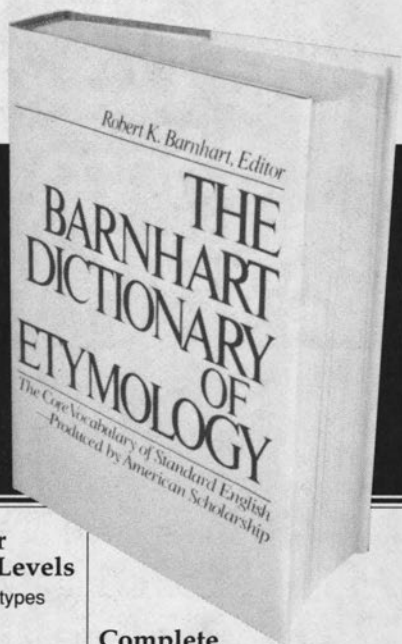
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