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Letters

The Information Fairy

To the Editor:

It is a bit disconcerting to read "BI as Theatre" (*C&RL News*, January 1989) and see the accompanying photograph of the Xavier University (Cincinnati) library's head of reader services, Vicki Young, dressed as "Ify, the Information Fairy" prepared to conduct a college freshman orientation program and, in the same month, read Linda Wallace's article in *American Libraries*, "The Image— and What You Can Do About It in the Year of the Librarian."

We have little quarrel with Young's attempt to refute "six major misconceptions about librarians and libraries," and we are glad that her presentation was "a big hit," but we really question whether it is necessary for any professional academic librarian to dress as an "Information Fairy" to "reduce students' anxiety" and to "present the library in a positive light."

It has been our experience, after over fourteen

years of public service and bibliographic instruction in academic libraries, that students' anxiety can be reduced and the library and the librarian can be positively perceived by students and faculty if the librarian is a friendly, knowledgeable professional who respects the students and shows genuine concern for and interest in their needs.

The theme of National Library Week is "Ask a Professional." Is "Ify, the Information Fairy" a professional? Would you ask a fairy sitting behind a reference desk at an academic library a question? If you did, would you take her answer seriously? If someone or something is iffy, does it not suggest a questionable or unknown quality? Is research simply the waving of a magic wand before an InfoTrac machine?

Wallace concludes her article regarding image: "The cold truth is, no fairy godmother is going to wave a magic wand. The image of the librarian will change only if we as a profession work together to make it happen."

Exactly. We think that dressing as Information Fairies is not going to make it happen too quickly. It is not only a question of how others perceive us, but, more importantly, how we perceive ourselves.

We, of course, are willing to rethink this if the marine biologists on our faculty start dressing as "Icky, the Ichthyology Fairy."—*William Roberson, Head, Reference Department, and Robert Battenfield, Reference Librarian, Long Island University.*

MAC MICRO

To the Editor:
I was very pleased to see in the "Innovations"

section (*C&RL News*, December 1988, pp. 748–49) Diane Richards's description of the Microcomputer Applications Committee which has been established here at WSU. A reference was made in that article to a policy on microcomputers that was developed early in the existence of our Microcomputer Applications Committee. I would like to note that our policy was structured on a model policy presented by John K. Duke and Arnold Hirshon in an article in the September 1986 issue of *Information Technology and Libraries* ("Policies for Microcomputers in Libraries: An Administrative Model"). I encourage institutions that are interested in establishing policies for microcomputers in academic libraries to examine this article. —*James J. Kopp, Systems Librarian, Washington State University.* ■■

Image Task Force

The Special Library Association's 1988–1989 Presidential Task Force on the Enhancement of the Image of the Librarian/Information Professional needs your input. One of the objectives of the Task Force, as outlined by SLA President Joe Ann Clifton and chair Kaycee Hale, is to survey memberships of various information professional associations to ascertain personal and professional opinions regarding image.

You may request a questionnaire from Kaycee Hale, Executive Director, Resource and Research Center, Fashion Institute, 818 W. 7th St., Los Angeles, CA 90017.

Network management

Rosary College to hold national institute on library network management

A national, week-long, residential institute addressing the problems of library networks, consortia, and utilities will be presented May 15–19 by the Rosary College Graduate School of Library and Information Science, River Forest, Illinois.

The institute will bring together key opinion leaders in the library community who currently hold, or who are likely to hold, advisory positions in the rapidly changing library networks field. Through seminars and elaborate role-playing scenarios, participants will identify, analyze, and—where possible—predict the problems libraries and networks will face in the next decade in networking.

Faculty for the institute are William Welsh, deputy director emeritus of the Library of Congress; Rowland Brown, president of Online Computer Library Center, Inc.; Richard Dougherty, professor at the Graduate School of Library Sci-

ence and Information Studies at the University of Michigan, and former director of the University of Michigan Library; and Pat Molholt, associate university librarian at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. Molholt is the author of a recent study, "Library Networking: The Interface of Ideas and Actions," commissioned by the Department of Education.
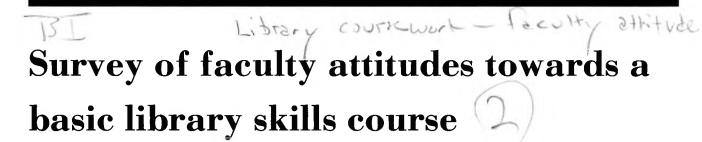
Institute director is Michael Koenig, dean of the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at Rosary College.

Library networking, in both the technical and nontechnical sense, is at a crossroads. Resource sharing is in danger of losing out to isolationism, according to Koenig. Every time librarians choose to purchase cataloging data from vendors and load it into stand-alone systems only without entering it into a national database, the nation loses the ability to share the item represented by such records.

Experts in the management of and planning for networks, agree that library networking is moving from traditional bibliographic networks to broad information delivery and access support systems, and from a national to a global focus. Because of this transition, library professionals face major challenges in the 21st century.

Funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, the institute is tuition-free, with lodging and meals at Rosary College provided from Sunday evening, May 14, through Friday afternoon, May 19. However, participation is limited to 75 library professionals with relevant networking experience. The selection committee is chaired by Beverly Lynch, university librarian at the University of Illinois, Chicago.

All interested professionals should submit an application by April 1 to: Beverly Lynch, University Librarian, University of Illinois at Chicago, Box 8198, University of Illinois, Chicago, IL 60680.

For a free brochure, contact the Rosary College Graduate School of Library and Information Science at (312) 366-2490, ext. 302, or write: Library Network Management Institute, Rosary College Graduate School of Library and Information Science, 7900 W. Division St., River Forest, IL 60305.   ■ ■

Survey of faculty attitudes towards a basic library skills course

By Rae Haws

Acting Coordinator of Library Instruction
Iowa State University

Lorna Peterson

Library Instruction Librarian
Iowa State University

and Diana Shonrock

Librarian Instruction Librarian
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BI vindicated by university faculty members.

T he ninety-year evolution of Iowa State University's required library skills course, Library Instruction 160, is described in a feature article in the 1981 *ALA Yearbook*.[1] Today the course is taught twice each semester and students earn one-half credit for their efforts. There are 2.5 FTE library faculty members teaching the course to over 4,000 students each year. In the course students learn the basics of using a library and about the services and resources of the Iowa State University Library. The Library Instruction faculty has written a manual which is used in the course. Supplementing the lectures is a three-part video program produced with the help of the Media Resources Center. Although formal bibliographic instruction has a long tradition at ISU, the basic bibliographic instruction course has often had an uncertain future. Several times in the past it has been targeted for elimina-

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[1] Warren B. Kuhn and Gertrude Jacobson, "Ninety Years of Library Instruction at Iowa State," *ALA Yearbook*, 1981, 13–18.