LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Stereotypes don't fit the librarian

Thank you very much for publishing Angelynn King's essay "Image *is* everything" (*C&RL News,* April 1999). I have gotten so tired of the whining in the library literature about the "image" of librarians that I didn't think I would ever read another article on this silly subject. Happily, I read the first paragraph and then was hooked.

I entered librarianship more than 20 years ago totally ignorant of, and unconcerned with, the image of librarians. I had discovered that libraries are really cool and I had come to respect the work that librarians do. That was image enough for me.

I realized that librarianship was a challenging, interesting, and useful profession and that it might be the right career for me. I was right. Image never entered the picture when I made this choice.

Thanks again for Ms. King's essay. I enjoyed it immensely.

I hope that this is the last word on the subject, for Ms. King has said it all.—*Tim Richards, University of Michigan, Dearborn, Tim.Richards@ umich.edu*

I must commend Angelynn King on her article. The whole issue of the image of a librarian is one I deal with almost every day. I hear from family and friends, "Oh, that makes sense that you're a librarian—you always did like books." Meanwhile, I haven't read for pleasure in over a year.

I recently gave copies of my new business card to my parents, and they said, "But it says you're a reference librarian on it." Apparently they prefer to tell people I'm on the faculty of the university.

I laugh about it, but unfortunately I realize that sometimes I propagate the same image concerns when I catch myself telling people of my faculty status if it doesn't seem to register what "librarian" means.

Let's face it. It's not that we don't look like librarians, it's that their librarian stereotype doesn't look like us!—*Roberto C. Ferrari, Florida Atlantic University, rferrari@fau.edu*

The column by Angelynn King, "Image is Everything," is absolutely right! Image is important in our society, whether it is brand image, self-image, professional image, or an outdated stereotype.

I am so glad someone has been brave enough to point out where our responsibilities lie in addressing or ignoring this stereotype.

I have been a reference librarian at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro for 11 years, and I have heard the words, "But you don't look like a librarian," many times. I usually laugh and say, "I'm sorry; I'll have to work on it." (I was a fashion model for 17 years before becoming a librarian, I have another degree in Home Economics, and I am a blonde . . . can we talk stereotypes?) One of my favorite model directors was an enthusiastic type who would admonish models who weren't projecting the right images for their outfits with, "Come on, girls. Sell it, sell it!"

In other words, models were not just something on which to hang the clothes; they had a job to do. And we librarians are not just something to put behind a public service desk; we also have a job to do, and I think most librarians "sell our product" very well. I am sure that most library users will not remember what the librarian is wearing, but I do know that they will remember whether or not the librarian is friendly, approachable, and helpful. That is the image that we want to promote.

It is my belief that behavior either helps in promoting or in dispelling a stereotype. I think that the best way for us to dispel the negative librarian stereotype is not for us to all buy designer clothes and wear the latest hairstyles, but to smile and welcome our patrons. Smiles make faces more attractive, and studies have shown that even babies respond more positively to attractive faces.

Does this have implications for librarianship? Is there a study here?

Thanks for an entertaining and thought-provoking article. I plan to use it as a discussion launcher with my advanced reference seminar students this summer.—*Amy McKee, Amy_McKee@uncg.edu*

Kudos for creative BI

Thanks for the article "Dusty old books: A collaborative approach to bibliographic instruction" (*C&RL News,* May 1999).

I appreciate Scott McLaren's courage to change from "teaching a skill set" to a collaborative method involving his students in the research process.

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As librarians we must be the leaders in teaching information literacy, which should include adding new methods to those that are tried and true. Whether in search of books or Web sites, our students must become more aware of the need to evaluate their information sources. I appreciate him sharing his ideas.—*Fred Olive, University of Alabama at Birmingham, folive@beowulf.mhsl.uab.edu*

Great article by Scott McLaren (Dusty old books, May 1999, *C&RL News*.) I applaud his creativity, innovation, and courage!—*Judith Mayzel, Oakton Community College, jmayzel@oakton.edu*

New species sighting
My colleagues and I read Art A. Lichtenstein's witty and slyly irreverent "Field guide to library managers" (*C&RL News,* April 1999) with delight. Right on, Art!

Here in the Southeast we have had sightings of a new, aggressive species, which seems to be a

hybrid of the Dart-flinging ladder-backed stabber and the Pasture land committee former. Whatever its origins, it moves fast and frantically and attracts flocks of fellow-travelers, all imitating its distinctively shrill cry. Alas, many of these birds fall, exhausted, by the wayside; feathery little carcasses are strewn, gasping, on the beaches and amongst the fallen palm fronds.

Yes, the "Field Guide To Library Managers: How To Identify Species Found In Most Libraries," is an essential purchase for all academic collections, if only for self-protection. . . . . Chirp! Chirp!—*Jo Manning, University of Miami, drmuk@ji.mo.com*

Absolutely loved Art Lichtenstein's article, "Field guide to library managers!" Sometimes it seems our profession is humorless; always nice to learn someone out there has a sense of humor! Keep 'em coming!—*Carole A. Larson, University of Nebraska, Omaha, Carole_A_Larson/LIB/UNO/UNEBR@unomail.unomaha.edu* ■

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handle complex resources, find and reference aspects not evident to catalogers (leading to reduced effort by catalogers and selectors), and provide more information to patrons. In the future researchers plan to maximize embedded metadata, improve the interface, deal with frames and other context issues, experiment with for-fee resources, evaluate how much of a site to index, and merge Harvest Indexer results with Web OPAC, thus having several different forms of description available for users.—*Lauren Matacio, Andrews University*

The bleeding edge of access to full-text electronic information
Billie Joy Reinhart (Cleveland State University) set the context for the session, noting that the scientist's desire for readily available literature is becoming more of a reality through electronic delivery and access.

Flora Shrode and David Atkins, of the University of Tennessee (UTK), presented information on the use of UnCover Subsidized UnMediated Ordering. Library users ordered fax delivery of 1,500 articles in 1998, costs exceeded $36,000. UTK librarians have identified 279 titles as "cancellation candidates," representing $199,000. Twelve hundred print journals were cancelled prior to the SUMO project, while electronic subscriptions are increasing in number. UTK

utilizes software to create, import, delete journal records in the online catalog, and to automate a regular review of links for those journals.

Thomas Dowling (OhioLINK) demonstrated the OhioLINK Electronic Journal Server, running on ScienceServer software. It brings together issues of multiple publishers with one search interface and centrally mounted archives. Keyword searching of articles is complemented by journal title access from the central catalog. Article-specific links to the journal server from many databases facilitate retrieval. Links from full-text on the journal server back to ISI Web of Science enhance cited reference searching capabilities.

Patricia Kreitz (Stanford University) spoke on the "impact of self-publishing on information management" at the Stanford Liner Accelerator Laboratory Library, which maintains the High Energy Physics database (HEP) of preprints (a SPIRES database). HEP covers more than 374,000 items (gray and white literature), dating from 1974. It tracks the eventual publication of preprints in peer-reviewed sources, and has become a critical resource for the high-energy physics community. Submissions to SPIRES are electronic and processed within hours of receipt; it is the initial step when submitting an article to the new *Journal of High Energy Physics.*—*Alison Ricker, Oberlin College* ■