

glimpse of a larger professional world which such a meeting inherently offers. It is safe to speculate that, NEH-funded or not, many new program ideas are likely to be tried at the libraries of those institutions represented in Madison.

The April workshop was the last ACRL/NEH event on humanities programming for academic li-

braries. Related programs are envisioned for the future, but these are still in the proposal stage. The previous workshops all emphasized the accessibility of the National Endowment for the Humanities, and encouraged librarians to utilize existing public funds in order to bring their public the humanistic experience. ■■

The Librarian As Library User: A Personal Comment

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We librarians speak fervently about our goal to serve the users of our libraries. Yet how many of us are library users ourselves, both of our own library and other libraries in our community? If we are library users, do we utilize our experiences to make our libraries easier to use? Too often the attitude is, "If I can find it, why can't they?" We have forgotten how much trouble we had the first time we tried to find the same thing.

For the past few years I have been doing research on liberation theology in Latin America. My primary goal has been to discover the best sources for locating current English-language materials on the subject. As a reference librarian, I could feel comfortable on both sides of the desk. I had not realized the difference between my attitude to the library as a librarian and as a user until, when checking a list of promising articles, I found myself muttering, "We don't have any of the good journals." I stopped and chuckled as I remembered how many times I had heard users saying the same thing!

From behind the desk my reply was always sympathetic as I suggested that a user request articles through interlibrary loan. From in front of the desk I felt the same frustration, maybe even more so. Since I knew the state of the serials budget, I also knew that the chances of adding to the collection were very slim. Even if we did add the journals now, we could not afford the backfiles containing those great articles from two years ago.

Do I always take the time to explain the limitations of interlibrary loan? For example, how long it takes to fill a request or the fact that some items may not be loaned at all. Our library has begun a procedure whereby we will request items for undergraduates through interlibrary loan, not only if they have a note from their professor, but also if they get the signature of a reference librarian. This procedure has made me much more aware of the importance of speaking to users about their needs before sending them to interlibrary loan. There is

always a chance that the library might own something that will help but the user knows nothing about it.

I had always thought of myself as a library user as well as a librarian. I have used and supported the local public library in communities where I have lived. This use has been for recreational reading and as an alternate source for general information. Now I realize that finding out what other libraries in the area have in their collections and what services they provide can aid me in making referrals.

When I worked on a subject master's degree a few years after completing my MLS, I was amazed at how much easier it was for me to complete assignments requiring use of the library. Just understanding the basics of how a library functions was a great asset, although this headstart did not eliminate all the problems. In fact I ended up giving informal library instruction to my classmates.

This instruction helped me to realize that knowing how to use the library and really using it can be two different things. Just being aware of the filing rules for the card catalog is a great advantage. Knowing that cards can be misfiled or the title card can be missing should make it a routine procedure to go that little bit farther in searching for a book. Do I always carry this knowledge over when helping a user?

As a librarian I usually don't hesitate to ask if I need help in finding something. With others this is not always the case. A commonly acknowledged problem is how to create an atmosphere around the reference desk that welcomes questions. One aspect of this problem I have encountered is that the work I do at the desk will create the impression that I am too busy to be bothered. On the other hand, just sitting and waiting for questions gives the impression that I don't have enough work to do. Being aware of people in the area and watching for signs that they need help takes a conscious effort that goes a long way toward creating an appropriate atmosphere.

One of the most popular library cliches says that library instruction has the greatest impact on a person who needs it the most. The same principle

holds true for gaining knowledge about library tools. To explain a reference source well, you must know how it works in practice as well as theory. Reading the introductory materials carefully and using it creatively to answer a few concocted questions of your own should be common practice.

During my current research project I have been using a wide variety of indexes and abstracts. It is one thing to know the basic arrangement of an index and quite another to get acquainted with its intricacies. After using an index for my own research needs, I feel much more confident about explaining it to someone else and better able to recommend it for a particular subject.

Another benefit of my research has been discovering books and journals that our library should own. The strengths and weaknesses of our collection have become very evident as I have tried to find the things I need. Although I had not set out to do collection analysis, that is in fact part of what I have accomplished.

But the greatest benefit has been looking at the library from the other side of the reference desk as a user. It is easy to read about improving library service but much harder to put those good intentions into practice. We all need to step back and take a fresh look at how we do things, both individually and institutionally. For me this happened as I became more sensitive to my own problems as a library user and began looking for ways to help others who encountered these same problems. I wish I could say that the experience has enabled me to recommend great changes to make our library easier to use. What it has done is make me more aware of the frustrations and the triumphs of a user.

Being a user helps technical services librarians as well as those in public services. Problems with using the card catalog can lead to the conclusion that careful revision of filing and a good system of cross-references are needed. The benefits of prompt claiming of missing or late journal issues are brought home when the missing issue is one you need yourself. And when you want a recently published book that might take months to arrive by the approval plan—are you willing to wait?

Once a book has been received we list it on our Book History Report (an in-process list on microfiche). Any book listed here can be requested for rush processing. However, it is an easy step to forget after checking the card catalog and the OCLC terminal even when a user wishes a recently published title.

The attributes that make a good librarian also make a good library user. To be successful you must be intellectually curious about your topic. You must be willing to go with your hunches as you follow the trail, like any good detective. Some of the best discoveries are made intuitively.

I have had successes as well as failures. One thing I have noticed is that success comes as often by chance, by wonderful serendipity, as it does from careful thought and knowledge. And we call it li-

brary *science*?

In institutions with faculty status where librarians are required to do research and publish, one of the major benefits of doing research is often overlooked. In the process you become a library user and look at the functioning of the library from a different perspective. This experience creates empathy with other users, which can result in your making their experiences in the library more rewarding. Or it may result in changes within the system to provide better service.

If we are to meet the goal of providing the best service possible for our clientele, we must look at our library from both sides of the desk. ■■

WESTERN EUROPEAN STUDIES SYMPOSIUM

On May 8–11, 1983, approximately 130 librarians, scholars, booksellers, and publishers concerned with research resources for Western European studies in the United States and Canada met at the Sheraton-Ritz Hotel, Minneapolis. The symposium, which included several distinguished visitors from Western European countries, was held under the auspices of the University of Minnesota's Western European Studies Center.

Martha Brogan coordinated the symposium in cooperation with the Center's director, Michael Metcalf, and a Steering Committee of University of Minnesota librarians. An advisory committee that included the symposium chair, Clara M. Lovett, Library of Congress, and representatives of major U.S. research libraries assisted with planning and fund-raising.

The major themes of the symposium included the current state of Western European studies, probable future directions of the field, and the multi-faceted issue of collection development. The Council for European Studies has made available a subsidy for the publication of significant papers that were presented. Four members of the Advisory Committee, Anthony Angiletta (Yale), Martha Brogan (University of Minnesota), Charles Fineman (University of California, Santa Cruz), and Clara M. Lovett (Library of Congress), were chosen to head an editorial committee that will determine the content and final form of the volume.

Symposium participants approved several resolutions of interest to Western European specialists, among them:

- that the Association of Research Libraries and the Library of Congress be urged to explore actively the process of shared cataloging;
- that ARL re-establish its leadership role in the acquisition of foreign materials through a specially created office;
- and that ARL and the Center for Research Libraries be urged to include a selection of the most important newspapers from smaller European countries in their microfilming projects. ■■