

Current Comments

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Traditionally, librarians in the field have tended to be critical of schools of librarianship, largely on the grounds that the curricula often seem out of joint with the so-called "real world." A recent personal experience serves as an example. The university's Affirmative Action Office asked the library to provide a cumulative bibliography on affirmative action in all areas of employment. Thinking that this would be a good assignment for the newest member of the library faculty, a very recent graduate of a major library school, I broached the subject with her. To my amazement, never, in her total library school experience, had she been exposed to the social, political, and legal background of affirmative action, to say nothing of the many difficulties involved with implementing such a program in an academic setting. She thought that affirmative action was something similar to VISTA or the Peace Corps.

Library schools have tried to bring the practitioner into contact with the student, but outside of a few librarians in the field who venture into the classroom or contribute to the literature, we have not found an organized, consistent, and constructive way to participate in the education of those who aspire to an academic library career. Complaining about the product has, unfortunately, been our most visible contribution to date.

Last year, ACRL began a program designed to present current problems of academic librarianship to the library school student. A recording of a seminar was published in an audio-cassette format in which six university library directors discussed the article "The Changing Role of Library Directors," by Arthur McAnally and Robert Downs, which appeared in the September 1973 issue of *College & Research Libraries*. More recently, ACRL has made available on loan the videotape of a program dealing with the problems of library governance, sponsored by the Academic Status Committee at the New York Conference. It also has available for loan a slide-tape interpretation of the "Guidelines for Two-Year College Learning Resources Programs." The response to these materials by library schools and libraries has been very encouraging. I believe it indicates clearly that ACRL can play a significant role in library education and in staff development programs as the producer and distributor of a wide range of audiovisual materials reflecting the major concerns of the profession.

What I have felt has been lacking in the li-

brary school experience is any immediate sense of the atmospherics of the academic library—the voices of real people discussing everyday issues, the struggle to wed principle with practice, the problems of adjusting to new technologies, the passion of conviction, and, indeed, the occasional boredom of high-level drudgery.

At those library schools which require some kind of internship for graduation, students do achieve a perception of these issues. It is likely that seldom do they really get into the inner workings of the library where the professionally sensitive issues are discussed and debated.

The response to the seminar on the McAnally-Downs paper stimulated an effort to capture on tape some of the more significant sounds of the library at work. The first result is a cassette tape of a meeting of fifteen untenured members of the University of Oregon Library faculty held late in the fall of 1974. The meeting was called to discuss, in the frankest possible manner, the ramifications of recent developments in higher education which would affect their professional careers, e.g., steady state or declining budgets, tenure quotas, and higher performance standards for promotion and tenure. All of the issues involved in full faculty status, particularly its responsibilities, were covered in the meeting, sometimes with considerable emotion. This kind of discussion,

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involving as it did some individuals who may not achieve tenure at their present institution, could, I feel, add an important new dimension to any class or seminar in a library school that is addressing this major issue in academic librarianship. The tape will be available in early February from ACRL.

Two other tapes are presently being reviewed for publication. One records a meeting of a faculty library committee in which the effects of inflation on the price of scholarly journals are discussed. The committee debates the desirability and mechanics of a program to identify little-used titles, cancel those subscriptions, and rely on the Center for Research Libraries for access to these journals. This tape is charged with emotion, sometimes masked by the polite rhetoric of the academy, but nevertheless obvious even to the novice. Here are the faculty and the library trying to adjust to changing times and circumstances. The second tape is a recording of the Library Staff Association at the University of Oregon discussing the implications of Ballot Measure 13, which came before the voters of Oregon in the November election. The Ballot Measure 13 would have imposed a strict state censorship in Oregon, affecting almost everyone in the library profession.

Whether either or both of these tapes war-

rant publication remains to be seen. However, they do illustrate the kind of material to which the library school student ought to be exposed and which the field, through ACRL, can make available. The usefulness of similar materials to staff development programs is obvious.

This kind of publication program can set ACRL on a course by which the librarians in the field can make a positive impact on library education. It seems to me that the program has definite potential with respect to making ACRL something important in the professional lives of present and potential members. It facilitates the sharing of concerns, ideas, successes, and failures with respect to the problems with which we are grappling in a way not possible through the printed word. The success of such a program would depend upon interest and input from the field, both in terms of topics that should be covered and in locally produced tapes that could be considered for publication. In other words, it would not be something that ACRL is doing for the profession as much as something the profession is doing for itself through ACRL. If we can move in this direction, it would be a step toward becoming a broad-based, truly professional association.

I would appreciate comments, suggestions—or even tapes to be reviewed for publication.

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