



Inside Washington

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A college business officer complained during a meeting in Washington in mid-November that ALA's latest draft *Standards for College Libraries* was a "self-serving document."

He meant that a professional document requiring the college to supply a minimum number of books and staff and a building that "shall harmonize with its function and shall be pleasing to the senses" would give the library unfair advantage at budget time over other departments.

What wasn't clear was who the "self" being served by these standards might be. A careful reading of the new draft *Standards* is an object lesson in the pleasures and problems of trying to speak in one voice for the patrons, employees, administrators, and owners of an enterprise. If there is anyone being "served" by these requirements, it is the patrons—the students and faculty who use the library.

At the November meeting at which the draft was presented to representatives of professional associations and accrediting bodies for advance comment, a faculty member attacked the standards for being too weak on faculty status, college officials challenged them for meddling in the affairs of presidents and boards of trustees, and library administrators criticized them for prescribing how a library should be run.

The draft calls for the librarians to be organized as an academic department and to administer themselves in accordance with the *Standards for Faculty Status*. Feeling this was not a sufficiently militant stance, a spokesman for the American Association of University Professors complained the statement represented a "fundamental ambivalence" because it didn't make faculty status a requirement of acceptability.

But the message wasn't lost on college administrators who announced "our presidents would explode" if faculty status became an issue in library accreditation.

Representatives of the colleges also complained that the document dwelt on dreary details of book collections, budgets autonomy, and work space. Instead, said one spokesman, the standards should contribute inspiring prose on the importance of libraries in the educational process. They should allow accreditors an "open-ended evaluation based on how ready and determined a library was to adapt to new ideas," said one. "Hortatory, not mandatory" language, said another.

Library administrators themselves objected to some standards which they felt trespassed on their territory by saying how a library should be run. The standards say "all corpuses of recorded information owned by the college for educational, inspirational and recreational purposes" belong in the library. In addition, the standards say, this material must be delivered for use within the library building and a high percentage of it must be provided "quickly."

Words like these, said one administrator, "go beyond telling institutions what is good practice and get into telling them how to do it."

As the briefing session drew to a close one college official turned to the members of the ACRL committee across the table. "If you want this to be a political document you've got to eliminate the grading. Otherwise the problem is librarians are going in to the college president and say 'look here, we're grade B.'"

Or grade F.

The new draft *Standards* is hardly a political document, some self-serving piece of propaganda to stir up more jobs for librarians and bigger budgets for libraries.

Many of us, at one time or another, have had the misfortune of working or studying in an institution where the books in the library seemed to have no relation to courses in the catalog. It is the people who teach and take these courses that the new standards are designed to protect.

Library standards, said the ACRL committee, have previously been considered ideals for which to strive and models on which to develop. But this time "their main thrust will be to provide a means for assessing the adequacy of college libraries."

True, the committee admitted, certain elements in the standards would have to change from institution to institution, but the quality is the same everywhere. "A certain minimum level of library quality must exist before any college can be allowed to grant a degree, and that level can be stated once and for all." ■■

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