
Letter

Humor and creativity: Chemists

To the Editor:

Norman D. Stevens asks in his article, "Humor and Creativity: Music," *C&RL News*, April 1989, pp.274-76: "Whoever heard of a funny chemist or chemistry librarian?" Fully realizing that Mr. Stevens is unconsciously (?) needling us to praise by first himself debunking the species (does he have a grant from the American Chemical Society for free publicity?), I fall victim to his lure. Having been married to a funny chemist for more than 33 years, and closely associated with his departmental colleagues for almost as long, I can unequivocally state that chemists have as good and as bad a sense of humor as any other group and are probably far guiltier of punning than most. My experience with chemistry librarians is nil, but science librarians—tempered perhaps by the lightheartedness of physics, biology and geology—have vied successfully with their fellow Oberlin librarians in puckishness, frivolity and sly humor.—*Dina Schoonmaker, Head, Special Collections and Preservation, Oberlin College, Ohio.*

Norman Stevens responds:

Anecdotal evidence, such as that cited by Mrs. Schoonmaker, fails to disprove my original contention about the unfunniness of chemists and chemistry librarians. As associate editor for informational science of the *Journal of Irreproducible Results*, and a regular reader of that infamous journal, I am well aware of what passes for humor among chemists even as I note that my fellow associate editors include those with specific responsibility for biochemistry (1) and chemistry (2). Some of it I enjoy but much of it, like much of chemistry, is over my head. As for chemistry librarians I suspect that they are so busy keeping the chemists happy, especially by protecting their departmental libraries from the threat of centralization, that they have little time for creativity and humor. So far, at least, no chemistry librarian, and indeed no science librarian of any kind, has responded to my challenge to submit examples that demonstrate that they too are human. Perhaps Mrs. Schoonmaker, and others, will send along appropriate examples of "puckishness, frivolity and sly humor." If they do, I'll be happy to apologize in a future commentary and compilation of what does exist.—*Norman D. Stevens, 143 Hanks Road, Storrs, CT 06268.* ■■



INNOVATIONS

Using Innovacq to create a subject guide to periodical indexes

By Margaret S. Ferguson

*Reference Librarian
San Jose State University*

and Christina A. Brundage

*Reference Librarian
San Jose State University*

The San Jose State University (SJSU) reference desk is very busy and students often wait in line to get service. SJSU has one main library which serves all students and faculty, and librarians must assist with all types of questions, from business to music. Why not provide students with a tool such as a subject guide to periodical indexes, with which they

could help themselves? The guide would be of assistance also to librarians who might not be familiar with all available indexes and to patrons who want to do an exhaustive search of the periodical literature in a field. In order to meet these needs, we created the *Subject Guide to Periodical Indexes* (SGPI).