

COLLEGE & RESEARCH LIBRARIES NEWS

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Rice University's annual Monte Carlo Party, a fundraiser sponsored by the Friends.

Public Relations in Your Library

*Lynne Rhoads
Public Information Officer
University of Washington*

A recently formed discussion group in ACRL has focused on public relations in academic libraries, with enthusiastic response by ACRL members.

Academic libraries have in common a primary educational function and a primary audience of students, faculty and administration. Public relations activities in academic libraries may range from formal to informal, according to the institution and its expectations of its library, but must always

(continued on p. 120)

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Library administrators at the University of Washington gave a party for the library staff, thanking them for their continued support in a period of continuing budget retrenchment. Economical decorations were balloons and paper cut-outs with a Spring motif, cut from old copies of library calendars.

Public Relations, cont'd

reflect the library's primary function and audience. These activities must also enhance the institution's concepts of its role and function and be presented in a manner consonant with these concepts.

Public relations activities vary as much as do academic libraries themselves and may include the following:

Publications—guides, brochures and informational materials; subject bibliographies; union lists and catalogs of specific collections; keepsakes, mementos and commemorative publications for special occasions; monographs on professional library topics; newsletters for faculty, administration, students, library staff and general distribution; and miscellanea such as bookmarks, invitations, library calendars, and Christmas cards.

Publicity outside the library—news releases to the general public from the parent institution's news services; articles or news notes in campus media; announcements, news (services, publications, events) in professional library and general media; TV or radio spots; and special mailings to selected groups.

Signs, posters and graphics in library buildings, including directional and name signs; and graphics, separately or with signs and posters.

Display and exhibits—special materials or infor-

mational displays; special occasion displays or exhibits; and loaned exhibits.

Orientation tours of the library for primary library users; visitors from other campuses, libraries, countries; and representatives of the general public (prominent citizens, high school classes, legislators).

Bibliographic instruction—formal classes for all students held in the library; lectures by library staff to specific classes, in the classroom or the library; and information sessions with faculty and teaching assistants.

Fund-raising—informational publications and letters of appeal; announcements and other publicity; special events and sales of discarded books.

Friends of the Library groups can particularly help the library in public relations with its secondary audiences—the general public and special interest groups. Friends groups may comprise internal campus departments, organizations, individuals; alumni; political groups; legislators and businessmen; organizations or individuals interested in certain subjects or kinds of library materials.

Activities of Friends groups may include fund-raising; programs of gifts to the libraries; newsletters; informational meetings with library staff; and sponsorship of public events like lectures, panel dis-

cussions, symposia, library celebrations of significant achievements, and receptions for visiting dignitaries, authors and outstanding faculty.

Academic libraries are also becoming interested in public relations directed toward the library staff. Besides sponsoring the traditional newsletters and staff association formal functions, the library administration may also hold discussions for staff to stress the benefits of good public relations and ways the staff may contribute. At staff meetings, library administrators may present information on the library's current activities, goals and problems. Staff members may be included in library committees, task-forces and administrative projects; and be recognized formally or informally for their contribution to the library's functioning. Regular, informal all-staff coffee hours encourage employees to meet and exchange information.

Academic library administrators may also evaluate the public relations impact of problems, proposals and decisions before issuing formal policy and operational directives. They may prepare public relations materials to accompany library reports to the institution's administration, and evaluate the reports for public relations impact. Finally, library administrators may investigate outside support or co-sponsorship for specific programs or activities.

This new academic library focus on public rela-

tions is often accompanied by new graphics and design that visually coordinate library publications, letterhead and forms, to project a desirable image of the library. ■ ■

Editor's Note: This article has been reprinted from the ALA Public Information Office's publication, Power Tools Publicity Book 1984: Ideas for National Library Week and All Year Long. It is available from PIO for \$3.

College Library Closings

The ACRL College Libraries Section's Ad Hoc Committee on Libraries in Closing Colleges is preparing a draft for a checklist that will provide valuable assistance to librarians who are caught up in the trauma of a college that is shutting its doors. While some committee members have direct knowledge and experience of closings, the committee would like other librarians to volunteer as reactors to the draft, especially those who have disposed of their collections or received all or part of a collection from a closed institution.

If you are interested, please contact John Sheridan, Head Librarian, Transylvania University Library, Lexington, KY 40508.



In October 1983 bookmobile service, courtesy of the Los Angeles County Public Library, began on the campuses of California State University, Los Angeles, and the University of Southern California. Shown at the dedication, l-r, are: Linda F. Crismond, L.A. County; Morris Polan, CSU; and Roy Kidman, USC.