

# Letters

## Librarianship too attractive?

To the Editor:

Patricia Kreitz's article on recruitment of new librarians ("Recruitment & retention in your own backyard," April 1992) reminded me of the situation here at Pitt-Bradford. Over the past several years five library employees have gone to library school. (Two are working librarians, three are still in progress.) Two more are planning on going. In addition, one of our English instructors and one of this year's graduating seniors are planning to start working towards the MLS this year or next. This might not seem unusual until one considers that we only have six clerical and paraprofessional positions and ten work/study students. The problem is that we keep having to replace staff! Are we making this look too attractive?—*Dennis Frank, University of Pittsburgh, Bradford*

## Or too difficult to achieve?

To the Editor:

I read with great interest Patricia Kreitz's article, since it parallels in many ways what we are trying to do here in North Dakota. In spite of having low crime, low taxes, low cost of living, great air quality, and hardly any rush hours (rush minutes are more like it), it is hard to recruit librarians to come here, and so the North Dakota Library Association is trying to "grow our own" professionals by providing the means for paraprofessionals to earn their MLSs through distance education. The program has generated an enormous amount of interest—over 300 positive responses—and we hope to get the project going in the next year.

Three concerns were not addressed in the article which have an impact on the ability of paraprofessionals to earn their graduate degrees. All relate to the fact that most paraprofessionals are people with lives rooted in their communities by the ties of other family members, and cannot simply pack up their lives for a year or two and go off to earn a graduate degree.

First, some are concerned that they will educate themselves out of a job. If they are currently working in a position that does not require an MLS, there is no guarantee that there will be a higher-level job available to them in

the library where they are currently working when they have the graduate degree, or that their job position could be rewritten. In academic libraries where some degree of academic rank is inherent in some positions, this can be a real problem.

Second, if librarians are paid badly, paraprofessionals are paid even worse. Many of them cannot afford either to take the time off to earn a degree or to pay the tuition involved. There needs to be a commitment on the part of the institution where the prospective student works to grant release time, to provide travel expenses, or to help with tuition costs, in exchange for a definite commitment on the part of the student to work for the institution for a set term of years. It is certainly to the benefit of the institution to upgrade the abilities of its staff quite as much as its faculty.

Third, the physical difficulties in acquiring a graduate degree may be quite prohibitive. For instance, it is about 12 hours from our college to the nearest ALA-accredited library program. Commuting, in these circumstances, is simply ridiculous, especially in the winter. Distance education is the only possible solution, and it would be a great help if ALA would provide more direction and practical assistance in this area.

All these are difficulties which must be addressed if we are to do more than stir the desire to become professional, degreed librarians in the breasts of our paraprofessionals. After recruitment, one must look to the practicalities and logistics of the matter in order to take the next logical step.—*Phyllis Ann K. Bratton, director, Raugust Library, Jamestown College*

## Kudos for new C&RL News format

To the Editor:

Congratulations on the new *C&RL News* format! It's lively, bold, and easy to read and the cover of the April issue is wonderful. If professionals must be concerned about the image they project, their communications must also correctly reflect their professional status. I think your April issue is right on target and I am sure this is only one of many congratulatory letters you will receive from your readership. My compliments on a job well done.—*Bobbi Ciarfella, associate, Perry, Dean, Rogers & Partners: Architects*

To the Editor:

Just wanted to let you know how much better the publication looks. It is so much easier on the eyes and it looks more lively. Great move!—*Marty Goldberg, Beaver Campus, Penn State University Libraries*

To the Editor:

The last two covers of the *News* have just been spectacular. At last the *News* has gotten some real style. I do hope you are going to continue these handsome covers. It makes getting the magazine a real treat. It causes me to want to look inside. I hope others have the

same reaction. My thanks for striking a blow for progress.—*Jay Martin Poole, assistant director for collection and bibliographic services, Texas A&M University*

## **Repetitive-motion injuries**

To the Editor:

I am pleased that the issue of carpal tunnel and other repetitive-motion injuries was discussed in the March 1992 *C&RL News* ("Coping with repetitive-motion injuries in a large academic library," and "What, exactly, is carpal tunnel syndrome?"). I have two comments, however. One phrase from the Eissinger and Ricks article raised my hackles (can that become a repetitive-motion injury?). They state the "staff committee was composed of professional and paraprofessional librarians." What is a "paraprofessional librarian?" Surely this is an oxymoron.

Second, Ricks states the "median nerve provides sensation to the hand and fingers" which implies all of the hand and fingers. The median nerve comes up the inside of the wrist and serves the thumb and first two fingers; the ulnar nerve comes up the back of the wrist, serves the last three fingers, and is the same one affected by hitting your "funny bone." Yes, that means one finger has two nerves supplying it. I was treated for carpal tunnel myself from conservative splinting to final use of very successful surgery over ten years ago, before it was a fashionable disease. Since it was my writing hand that was affected, I was out for one week until the stitches were removed with no long-term disability or rehabilitation treatments. The total cost even in today's dollars was far less than \$20,000, and it then was inpatient and now is outpatient surgery. I have also been splinted for tenosynovitis in the index finger of the same hand. The sensation is entirely different, but both are painful.

I hope that by now all institutions are aware of the problems of repetitive-motion injuries, and that employees are aware that they should speak up before the injuries require extensive treatment. Thanks for reminding us.—*Jean E. Crampon, head librarian, Hancock Library of Biology and Oceanography, University of Southern California, Los Angeles*

*(C&RL News welcomes your signed, typed comments on recent content in our pages or on matters of general interest to the academic or research library profession. Write to: The Editor, C&RL News, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611; fax (312) 280-7663.)* ■

## **Annual Conference notices**

### **SEES offers free workshops**

ACRL's Slavic and East European Section will offer two half-day workshops during ALA's Annual Conference in San Francisco. The first, aimed at the non-specialist, is called "Slavic and East European Collections and the Dilemmas of the Non-Specialist" and will be held on Saturday, June 27, from 9:00 a.m. to noon. The second workshop, "New Challenges in Slavic and East European Librarianship," is for the more advanced Slavic librarian and will be held Saturday, June 27, from 2:00-4:00 p.m. For details contact: Laszlo Kovacs at (507) 645-9649 or Susan Burke at (206) 543-5588.

### **Research Committee offers mentors**

ACRL's Research Committee will bring together mentees and mentors on Sunday, June 28, 1992, from 2:00-4:00 p.m. at the Annual Conference in San Francisco under its year-old pilot project linking academic librarians on bitnet. Beginning researchers are given the opportunity to work with experienced librarians on issues, problems, methods and techniques of library and information science research. Individuals wishing to hear about the project and/or become new members are encouraged to attend.

### **Visit Shields Library**

Take a self-guided tour of the expanded Shields Library at the University of California-Davis after ALA. The campus is an easy exit off I-80, 75 miles east of San Francisco.