

projects undertaken by CNI members and issues CNI members are exploring were presented and discussed. The meeting schedule and a listing of the session topics and speakers is available from the CNI FTP files at FTP.CNI.ORG in directories /pub/CNI/ tf.meetings.

In addition to the project reports, WG meetings, and synergy sessions (which stimulate new ideas), the CNI meeting contains several plenary sessions which are focused around the meeting theme. This November's theme was "Optimizing Public and Private Interests" and explored the relationships between the two and how each can work effectively in a networked environment while minimizing the negative impact of one on the other.

Three plenary sessions were held on 1) the role of government, not-for-profit, and for-profit sectors in optimizing public and private interests; 2) optimizing public and private interest in the management of intellectual property which looked at copyright, contract law, and licensing developments; and 3) optimization of public and private interests in the last mile of the network. More detailed summaries than can be provided here will be available as a meeting report at FTP.CNI.ORG in directories /pub/CNI/ tf.meetings.

There is probably no better summary of the work of CNI over the past three years than the words of William Y. Arms (vice-president for computing services, Carnegie Mellon University) near the conclusion of the meeting:

"Three years ago everybody [computer center people, librarians, administrators, etc.] thought differently; today we have a common vocabulary.

"The Coalition for Networked Information does not build the electronic library but has become a superb forum for those who do build and use it to meet and work together."

Although this topic was not directly addressed, there was a strong undercurrent of concern about the need to expand use of the network to all sizes and types of libraries. Libraries of all sizes and constituencies are encouraged to become active in managing and navigating the information world. The Working Groups, for example, often included presentations from libraries which only recently became involved with electronic resources, so it's never too late to begin!

The next meeting of the Task Force of CNI will be April 5-6, 1994, in Washington, D.C. ■

Letters

Tenure is important

To the Editor:

I read with interest the essay by Beth Shapiro (November 1993) in which she advocates dumping faculty status for librarians. A few years ago I would have agreed completely with her, but some empirical study modified my opinion. (See my article in *Library Administration & Management* (Fall 1990): 184-93.)

Faculty status without tenure is nothing. With tenure it is something of value, which I will here refer to simply as tenure. Note that tenure for general faculty is ubiquitous in four-year colleges and universities; it is not ubiquitous among librarians. Without questioning why this dichotomy exists, Shapiro misses the point of what faculty status for librarians represents. Answering questions about why tenure exists and [if] it should apply to librarians provides better rationale for a dump faculty status decision than our anecdotal experience.

Long justified as the way to secure academic freedom (the real myth), tenure exists primarily because it is the only quantitative mechanism that monitors quality in academics. The tenure process delegates the hiring decision to the faculty who use this mechanism as a means to assure themselves of quality among their peers. . . . At large research universities, the tenure process (i.e., faculty status for librarians) unfortunately imposes costs—in the form of diminished campuswide research productivity—which overwhelm its benefits. Shapiro is right in regard to those places. At teaching-oriented institutions (i.e., four-year liberal arts colleges) tenure helps to insure some level of scholarship, which makes it possible for faculty to teach better. . . . Therefore, it works to elevate quality. Fortunately librarians at teaching institutions often have more opportunity to help support the instructional program by working with faculty than they do at research institutions. And, tenure here helps elevate quality among librarians with positive return to the product of those schools. These differences in campus agendas taken together provide some explanation of why tenure is ubiquitous among teaching faculty and not among librarians.

Appropriate action: dump faculty status at Rice, keep it at Trinity.—*Richard W. Meyer, director of the library, Trinity University* ■