Conclusion

In summary, our CD network has been a tremendous success, but it has forced us to address the issues of what services can be realistically provided and what services must be reduced or eliminated. Over the past ten years more and more services have been added without appreciable staff increases. Because professional positions are expensive, it usually takes years to add just one position, and we are now creating a new reference model with a changing role for reference librarians. This new role has the potential to eliminate the reference desk as we now know it. Last year we added a Hypercard Information Station[1] which has made a significant impact in lowering the number of directional questions asked. We are investigating how electronic technology can further assist us in serving our patrons and allow us to function more efficiently and effectively. ■ ■

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[1]Paul Carnahan, "Designing a Hypercard Information Station: Principles for Product Developing," in *Computers in Libraries, 1989, 4th Annual Conference and Exhibition, Conference Proceedings*, ed. Nancy Melin Nelson (Westport, Conn.: Meckler, 1989).

Letters

Leadership

To the Editor:

In a recent letter to *C&RL News* (October 1989, p.799), I inadvertently allowed a kingly error to pass through undetected. Freud, I'm sure, would have been delighted. In my letter I was arguing for the importance of making greater commitments to professional development and the importance of reading smart as one step to prepare for leadership. I noted that we all have a stake in the future and therefore must continue our commitment to career development, "...particularly of those who will someday assume the reigns of leadership." I must have been recalling with some nostalgia the days when directors reigned rather than assumed the reins of leadership, which is more typical today. Those who noticed the slip may have assumed I said what I meant.—*Richard M. Dougherty, Editor,* Journal of Academic Librarianship, *University of Michigan.*

Chinese academic libraries

To the Editor:

We read, with some interest, Susan Tsui's short report on academic libraries in China in the September 1989 issue (pp.662–64). Though it is obviously impossible to give a complete picture of academic libraries in a country as vast and diverse as China, there are several points in the article that deserve further comment.

First, though the author is basically correct in her figures for Chinese library salaries, it should be pointed out that in China the employer is responsible for providing a vast range of fringe benefits unheard of in North America. The most important of these is housing, which is provided at an extremely low cost (about 10 yuan or $3.00 per month) and extra payments are made for coal, oil, and food. Also, various levels of government provide coupons that allow citizens to purchase food at highly subsidized prices. Chinese academic salaries are certainly not high, but the bare figures provided by Tsui paint a bleaker picture than exists in reality.

The author also seems to judge the staffing of Chinese libraries by current North American standards. While it is true that many senior library staff in China do not have MLS or equivalent degrees, it is incorrect to think of these people as political appointments. There is a critical shortage of trained librarians in China, especially over 30 years of age, and it is not uncommon for other academic staff to be assigned to work in the library. Many of these people have been librarians for many years, while others have been assigned more recently in an attempt to fill the gap of staff in their middle years (35–50) caused by the disruptions of the Cultural Revolution. This appointment of non-librarians to library posts existed not so long ago in North America, and it is fair to point out that the Librarian of Congress is an eminent scholar rather than a trained librarian. As more librarians become available and the possibilities for staff mobility increase in China, this situation is expected to change.

In the health sciences, subject access to library collections is becoming the norm. The Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) have been translated into Chinese, and the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences (the Chinese MEDLARS Center) is developing a MEDLARS-compatible database of Chinese-language citations. Though many Chinese libraries do continue to use classification, rather than subject headings, as the key to their collections, most give several class numbers to each book. This system is not unique to China, though it may

be rare in North America, where classification theory may be less advanced.

Chinese academic libraries are certainly less developed than similar libraries in North America, but this situation is changing rapidly as more librarians are trained and library buildings are constructed. There will probably remain a shortage of western books and journals due to the high cost of this material, but Chinese libraries do have a strong core of subject experts.—*Xiong Dizhi, Director of the Library and Dean of the Faculty of Medical Library and Information Science, China Medical University, Shenyang, China; and David S. Crawford, Senior Librarian, McGill University, Montreal (Visiting Research Librarian, China Medical University, Shenyang).* ■ ■

Computerizing communication for interlibrary loan

By Amy Chang

Coordinator for Interlibrary Loan
Texas Tech University Libraries

Electronic mail for faculty and students solves the ILL crunch at Texas Tech.

An electronic mail system, designed by the staff of Interlibrary Loan (ILL) at Texas Tech University Libraries, allows faculty and students to request materials from their offices and homes via the E-Mail system any time of the day. Users can choose different request forms from the menu. The staff of ILL receives the request accordingly. Several options have been programmed for the menu-driven E-Mail system: book, article, dissertation, renewal requests/status checking, and questions-and-answers. Instructions for using the E-Mail system and a short form for patron information were also programmed into the system.

The statistics for the borrowing unit of Interlibrary Loan at Tech Libraries had shown a steady growth during fiscal year 1987/1988 (an average

14% increase). This was followed by a 36% increase the first seven months of 1989. Approximately 700 messages are sent to patrons monthly, notifying them of arrived materials, problems with requests, overdues, and charges. The staff constantly interacts with patrons by phone or in person about request forms, renewal of books, checking the status of their requests, etc. Since the number of requests increased dramatically, a more efficient way to communicate with library users was required. The staff concluded that an electronic mail system would meet the demand for quick and reliable communication. The VAX was chosen for installing the E-Mail system.

The VAX system is one of the mainframe systems in the Advanced Technology Learning Center