



Letters

To the Editor:

A colleague sent us an article from your July issue which we somehow missed—it was entitled "The Curious Case of the Library Building" and was written by Lawrence Lieberfeld, a management consultant with Peat, Marwick, Mitchell & Co. The article's gist is that Formula C of the ACRL standards makes wasteful library buildings. Mr. Lieberfeld believes that more books should be stored in the stacks and, at the same time, substantially less space devoted to patron seating. In other words, to be cost effective library buildings should be small and fully packed.

After reading the article we had one common thought: Mr. Lieberfeld is talking about where academic libraries have been and not where they are going. He's talking about book warehouses with large but rarely used collections, students who need study halls and not information, and faculty who ignore libraries as partners in the educational process.

But the new electronic technologies are changing all that. On-line catalogs, for example, are opening the stacks. Installation of an on-line catalog usually means an immediate increase in the use of the materials housed in the stacks. On-line interlibrary loan services are doing the same thing—although, granted, the materials come from somebody else's stacks. But interlibrary loan tends to be a two way street. Telecommunications are causing increases in reference services. Searching a commercial on-line database can be a difficult task. Since it requires knowledge of the thesaurus and a search strategy, most patrons rely upon reference librarians to perform the actual task.

Faculty are beginning to notice the changes occurring in "librarydom." A few are beginning to send their students to the library to use the various new technologies on a regular basis. Certainly the use of computerized self-instructional materials housed in academic libraries has grown considerably these last few years, as has the use of audio visuals. Some believe the teaching loads of academic librarians will rise to unprecedented heights in the next decade.

Now, let us get back to Mr. Lieberfeld's article. The idea, then, should not be to shove more books into the library, but to open access to information. Students need to study in the library because that is where the information is—and where it will be in ever increasing amounts in the future.

Of course, such arguments do not go very far with doubting Thomases. We will take a different tack: if one more book is shoved in the stacks, the stacks will collapse. That's the situation in too many libraries across the country. They are overloaded to the extreme.

Fully loaded seven shelf high double faced stack ranges separated from one another by three foot aisles require buildings with approximately 150 pounds per square foot live load capacities. Unfortunately many library buildings are without these capacities. Quite a few were constructed to hold only 120 pounds per square foot live loads. Buildings with self supporting stacks* rarely have more than 50-100 pound live loads in the areas which originally were designated by the architects to house the patron seats and staff offices.

*The stacks are bolted on top of one another and the load is transmitted directly to the ground below.

In other words, Mr. Lieberfeld's article is all well and good, but it may unfortunately result in the collapse of a few academic library buildings. Upgrading the floor loading capacities of old library buildings can be extremely costly. In some instances it is not cost effective. Convincing the administration to beef up the floor loading capacities of a brand new library building is also difficult. Although it may amount to only a 5% increase in the cost of construction, that increase may come to \$500,000. With budgets strained as they are, \$500,000 is simply too much money.

AARON AND ELAINE COHEN

Aaron Cohen Associates, New York.

To the Editor:

In those few sentences of Mr. and Mrs. Cohen's letter that touch at all on my article, they manage to distort its content totally.

For example, there is no indication whatever in what I wrote that libraries should be "small and fully packed." They can be as large as necessary to conform to the objectives and resources of the institution they serve. "Fully packed" is a loaded pejorative that implies crowded or otherwise unpleasant conditions, whereas what I tried to convey was that no one benefits from empty carrels or oversized aisles.

The Cohens say that I am "talking about where academic libraries have been and not where they are going." This is absurd; I am talking about the waste that is taking place right now in the planning and construction of dozens of academic library buildings. The major generator of these buildings is the growth in the bound volume component of the collections. Whether or not there should be, there will be more bound volumes at colleges and universities in July 1984 than there were in July 1983.

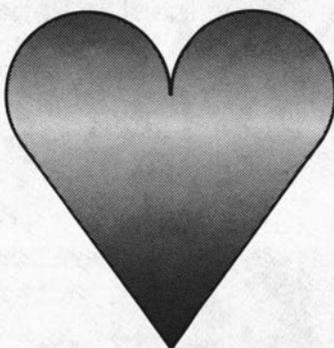
The Cohens' random observations on floor loading and the beating of the dead horse of the long abandoned self-supporting book-stack are also irrelevant to any of the issues I was discussing. My point was that *new* library buildings are poorly planned. Nor is there conflict between the planning criteria I proposed and the 150 lb./sq. ft. live load that is generally accepted today. Book-stacks in public libraries frequently conform to these criteria, which are in no sense radical.

Although it has little to do with what I have written, I think it is worth commenting on the Cohens' statement that "Students need to study in the library because that is where the information is—and where it will be in ever increasing amounts in the future." The fact is that electronic transfer of information can take place anywhere on campus, not necessarily in the library building. In general, newer ways of storing and transmitting information imply that academic library buildings in the distant future may not require as much collection space as they do now—but in the meantime there are 600,000,000 bound volumes to be accommodated.

LAWRENCE LIEBERFELD

A LIBRARIAN'S DREAM BECAME REALITY...

I



... and there was plenty of time for the interesting aspects of library work ... the new year started with far less "European headache".

Notorious trouble titles arrived (air freighted) at regular intervals, securely packed and always accompanied by a packing slip with key numbers exactly according to the library's instructions (and of vital importance to the administration).

And ... believe it or not, an occasional missing issue (if any) had already been claimed with the

publisher before it was noticed in the library ...

There was much more she could not remember after she woke up ... until she spotted the brochure she read the night before ...

You are invited to share her dream. Ask for the same brochure, giving full details of the Swets FAST[®] system, an online system of controlled serial distribution.



Yes

Send me the FREE Swets Information package immediately or call Swets toll free 800-428-1515 (in Pennsylvania 800-453-1515).

Have a Swets representative contact me

Mr./Ms./Mrs. _____

Title/Dept. _____

Library _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

Zip-code _____ Country _____

Phone (____) _____

Swets North America Inc. Swets Subscription Service
P.O. Box 517 P.O. Box 830
Berwyn PA 19312 USA 2160 SZ Lisse The Netherlands





A Prime Resource for Timely Information

- 32 Social Issues for the '80s
- Thousands of Articles
- An Instant Vertical File
- Ideal for Reports
- Responsive to Individual Needs
- Supplemented Annually



FOR INFORMATION, CONTACT:

SOCIAL ISSUES RESOURCES SERIES, INC. • P.O. BOX 2507, BOCA RATON, FLORIDA 33427
TELEPHONE: (305) 994-0079 TOLL FREE: 1-800-327-0513 (except AK, FL & HI)