



Letters

To the Editor:

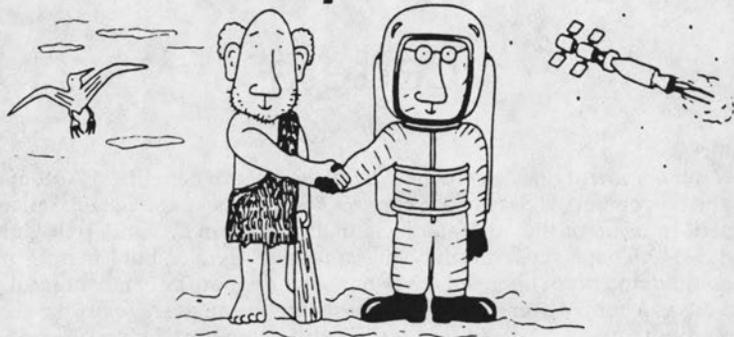
I wish to offer comment on Malcom Getz's article, "More Benefits of Automation," appearing in the November 1988 issue of *College & Research Libraries*. Getz calculates that the annual benefit to users of the automated circulation system at Vanderbilt University for 1987 was \$115,340. That is most certainly an impressive savings, but I'm not sure the individual user would find his or her respective share of the benefit very meaningful. If a library official told me as a library user that they were saving me an average of 78.5 seconds each time I charged out a book, I would find it difficult to come up with a serious response. I might even find it hard to keep from chuckling a little.

We need to ask questions about how automation affects the user before we make the final judgment on its benefits. Is the user going to bank the 78.5 seconds saved every time he or she checks out a book and then take a holiday at the end of the semester? Will users stand to receive money for the time they save in charging books? I suspect that the answer to both of these questions is an emphatic no!

\$115,340, impressive though it may be in the aggregate, when divided over 657,304 circulations amounts to no practical benefit to the user. I guess this is an example of the adage the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

DWIGHT E. STRANDBERG
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