

## Letters

To the Editor:

Leon Shkolnik's article (*C&RL* July 1991) on academic branch libraries reminded me that when I joined the staff of the Yale Library in 1938 it was beginning to consider development of a major branch library for the first time. For the rest of my life, the battle for and against centralization has continued unabated. The reason for this lies in the enormous disadvantage inherent both in large centralized collections and in multi-branch systems. (When I last checked, Harvard had 98 branches.) Therefore, in an attempt to avoid the problems of the kind we have, we leap the fence into the green grass of the other pasture. When Johns Hopkins built its large central library years ago, its branches were centralized *by vote of the faculty library committee*, but within a year great pressures developed to rebranch. Therefore, in planning for an ambitious new central library, the University of Kentucky is now thinking of centralizing most of its branches.

My faithful readers who are still alive will observe these forces at work in *The University of Colorado and Its Makers, 1876-1972*, which has occupied my last eight years, when it is published by Scarecrow Press in the near future. The University of Colorado Library's branches, which developed before the library was pulled out of "Old Main," clung to their rats' nests until an impressive central library opened in 1939, when they were all pulled in. Within fifteen years, space pressure in the main library began to spin off a number of branch libraries, two of which were driven back into the main library by legislative pressures in the 1970s, and three of which are now being united into a science library. My experience with branch libraries indicates that collections are much more heavily used when they are in the same building as the offices and classrooms of their specialties. The best library I have ever seen in forty years of wide-ranging library practice is the Business Library at UC, whose collection and services are deeply embedded in its faculty's awareness and teaching and inseparably interwoven into its curriculum. In contrast, circulation dropped 50 percent within a year in both branches forced back into UC's main library.

ELLSWORTH MASON  
Lexington, Kentucky

To the Editor,

I found the article "Pen, Ink, Keys, and Cards: Some Reflections on Library Technology" (*C&RL* July, 1991) by Michael Stuart Freeman, on the history of catalog technology, fascinating.

Though Freeman didn't mention it, perhaps the persistence of arcane abbreviations (many unintelligible except to the initiated) on *printed* (one way or another) catalog cards stems from the fact that each card was laboriously handwritten or typed. The use of abbreviations made the task easier. When we moved from handwritten or individually typed cards to printed "unit" cards, we should have quickly abandoned abbreviations to make the information we were providing more intelligible to our readers. This is a great example of horseless-carriage thinking.

I have been concerned about the abbreviation problem since the 1960s. I want to report that the wonderful folks at MARCIVE were able to translate abbreviations on

the cards we buy from them. I believe it would somewhat demystify the card catalog if librarians asked for this clarity from their card suppliers.

Another point: It's been my observation that, as the creation of catalogs moves from low technology to a higher technology, there is a greater and greater tolerance of error.

MARVIN H. SCILKEN

Director, The Orange Public Library

To the Editor:

I read with interest Paul Metz and Paul M. Gherman on the journal crisis (*C&RL* July 1991). While I found many of their remarks of interest, I remain troubled by the library profession's inability to confront the realities of what I like to term "the political economy of scholarly production" in the United States.

Since brevity is demanded, let me state the essentials of a longer lecture on the political economy of scholarly production as it affects libraries via their journal collections.

1. Scholarly journals are published for authors, not readers. Anyone examining the statistics of actual journal readership in this country is aware of this fact, and libraries are both a conduit and a final resting place for such journals.
2. Authors, most of whom are associated with academic institutions, want more print journals, not fewer, and they remain wedded to traditional print formats due primarily to issues related to tenure and promotion in their respective institutions.
3. Publishers of scholarly journals can raise prices precipitously because (a) most subscriptions are sold to libraries; (b) libraries are a captive market for such journals; (c) libraries are a captive market because authors (i.e., faculty members) are the final arbiters of what journals will be purchased by their respective libraries; and (d) libraries constitute a vital subsidy to the publication and dissemination of scholarly information.
4. The journal crisis may disappear as a result of a changing academic protocol that allows faculty authors to achieve promotion and tenure through publication in electronic format (or, as Bill Dix put it, "When scholars are ready to package the results of their labors in some form totally different from the printed book . . . the librarian will do what he can to facilitate the transfer"); *but*
5. The journal crisis will more likely dissipate as a result of increased funding for libraries so that they can buy more material in print form. This latter solution has been the way out for the past seventy years and, I suspect, will be the solution this time.

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To the Editor:

I read with great interest the article "ARL Directors: Two Decades of Changes" (*C&RL*, 5/91) by Marcia J. Myers and Paula T. Kaufman. However, I was surprised that my previous gender-based research on ARL administrators had not been used for comparative purposes by the authors. This research has been published in dissertation, book, and article formats so that it is readily available for literature review. Analysis of demographic and career characteristics among ARL directors and other line administrators is provided in the dissertation, "Female and Male Administrators in Academic Research Libraries: Individual and Institutional Variables Influencing the Attainment of Top Administrative Positions," Indiana University, 1982, with summary presentations in the book *Sex Segregation in Librarianship, Demographic and Career Patterns of Academic Library Administrators*, Greenwood Press, 1985, and a *Library Trends* article, fall 1985.

Although the authors used other studies which had data about age, educational background, and general and career characteristics such as types of previous positions and mobility, this type of information also was included in my research. Another area which I investigated was that of the institutional characteristics of ARL libraries which might have affected the distribution of female and male administrators. This topic, an especially interesting aspect of Myers and Kaufman's article, could have been supplemented by my gender-based data.

Realizing fully how challenging and demanding gender-based research is in the library profession, I commend the authors for their paper. In the future, however, I hope that other research of this type may benefit from reference to the publications cited herein.

BETTY JO IRVINE

Head of Fine Arts Library, Indiana University

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