

Letters

To the Editor:

Thank you for publishing Christopher W. Nolan's article "The Lean Reference Collection: Improving Functionality through Selection and Weeding" in your January issue. It was just what I needed.

We—there are five of us reference librarians here—started weeding our reference collection last fall. Our plan was that each of us would select two items per week for weeding, place those items, with explanatory notes, at the reference desk for review by the entire staff, and then submit the items to a weed vote at our weekly reference meeting.

We began with much enthusiasm for the task and commitment to the plan. Alas, under the pressures of day-to-day obligations, some of us have allowed our enthusiasm to wane and our commitment to waiver. I, especially, who pushed weeding with an almost religious zeal, have not kept the faith of late. I have been too busy, you understand, with "more important" things.

Reading Mr. Nolan's article, however, caused me to reflect upon who I am as a librarian and to remember just what it is that I am supposed to be doing. And now, I think I'd better get back to it!

GREGORY L. ANDERSON
 Calvin T. Ryan Library,
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To the Editor:

I noted with amazement and dismay journal price increases by three foreign publishers (*C&RL* 3/91). If Pergamon Press is one of the three foreign publishers, libraries are responsible, in a way, for Pergamon's Robert Maxwell buying the *New York Daily News*.

How did society let commercial publishers become the "toll takers" for the transmission of scientific information?

It may be naive, but isn't it possible to get foundation or government funding to establish U.S. noncommercial journals to compete in the marketplace? Many journal publishers appear to be reaping large profits in reporting research done, in good part, with taxpayers' funds.

I find it ironic and outrageous that publishers that sell primarily to libraries seem extraordinarily profitable; Gale was sold some years ago for \$64 million. Pergamon was sold recently to Elsevier for more than \$700 million.* It appears from the sale price that Pergamon is obscenely profitable. To give some scale to this price, \$700 million is estimated to be the *total* public library part of the U.S. trade book market.

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* I note from newspaper stories that Elsevier has purchased Pergamon for over \$700 million.