

Letters

To the Editor:

As someone who has read Stephen E. Atkins' "The Academic Library in the American University" (*College & Research Libraries*, 53:85-86, Jan. 1992) and reviewed it for another publication, I feel I must protest at the bilious review of that work by Beverly Lynch.

The fact that Lynch disagrees with the opinions of Atkins does not give her license to launch unsupported attacks on sections of his book based on points that he did not choose to make or on alleged ignorance on his part. Lynch tells the prospective reader that Stephen Atkins ". . . ignores the politics of American academic life and assumes that librarians are ignorant of the political process in that environment. . . ." He does not do the first, and any writer may, surely, state things that most of his or her readers know without presuming them to be ignorant.

It appears that Lynch disagrees with the idea of librarians as faculty and with the collegial model of library organization. She faults Atkins because he does not share those disagreements. She then slides from those issues into the whole question of faculty governance of universities, a quite separate issue that she believes has been settled in favor of her opinion. Not so.

The next accusation against Atkins is that his book "does little to chronicle the influence of individual librarians on the development of their [sic] operations." (I think she means ". . . the development of the operations of their libraries.") Since Atkins, apparently, does not espouse the Great Librarian theory of library history, why should he chronicle that influence?

The review is full of negative assertions without point or support. One discussion is described as "not very illuminating." No evidence of this lack of lumination is given. Another, perfectly straightforward statement, is described as "not developed." I understood it as it stood. Why does it need to be developed?

One can only speculate about the reasons for a reviewer writing unfairly negative reviews. The sound of axes being ground resonates throughout this review.

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To the Editor:

Certain conclusions drawn by Pamela J. Cravey in her study on the occupational role identity of women academic librarians have been bothering me since the publication of this article in *C&RL* (52:150-64, Mar. 1991). I had problems with the apparent inconsistencies between the data she presents and her profile of the "average" academic librarian. I was also troubled by the undocumented implications of her discussion of "orientation to the occupational role," that for public, school, and special librarians, their organizations are less complex, their clientele less diverse and demanding, their specializations less deep, their work less intellectually demanding, and their general orientation more determined. These things may all be true, but I found this presentation considerably less than convincing.

The chief problem I had, however, is found in the article's penultimate paragraph. Here Cravey refers to "the theory that the increase of homosexual men into librarianship

is linked to fulfillment of the female role." I first found this statement odd, since neither the occupational choice of librarianship among men generally nor the factor of sexual orientation figured in Cravey's study. I then consulted the source for this statement, a footnote in a paper on the history of women in public librarianship. This footnote presents no concrete historical evidence for "an increase of male homosexuals into librarianship" and offers only unsubstantiated and highly stereotyped speculation concerning the psychology and sociology of gay men, hardly a sound basis for any type of theory. Given that Cravey, earlier in her paper, discusses the profound negative effects that stereotypes have had on librarians and librarianship, one would think she would refrain from trafficking in stereotypes herself and from relying on sources that do so. One might also think that editorial sensitivity would have prevented such aspersions from being cast in a respected professional journal on the professional and personal motivations of any group, particularly a minority, within the profession.

BRIAN MCCAFFERTY

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To the Editor:

"The Library as a Marketplace of Ideas," by Ronald Heckart (52:491-505, Nov. 1991) is an excellent article, but I would have to take exception to Heckart's problem with "carrying the 'marketplace of ideas' so far as to have it become merely a process 'with no ethical or moral content.'" I have no problem with that at all. In fact, in his allusion to the ACLU and the Skokie incident (ACLU defending the right of neo-Nazis to march through a Jewish neighborhood) becoming just such a process "devoid of ethical or moral content," I was, and still am, fully on the side of the ACLU.

To me, this "mere process" of the marketplace of ideas has far more substance and grit to defeat censorship than this attempt to lay the marketplace on an ethical foundation of "self actualization" or "empowerment." I do not need such an additional foundation (nor do I think "intellectual freedom" does), and I am always suspicious of what such a foundation is, and who chooses it or has the right to choose it.

A "process" devoid of "ethical/moral content"? Whose morals, whose ethics? Librarian "interventionists" in collection development, I applaud; librarian "moralists," I abhor.

But again, thanks for the stimulating article, Mr. Heckart.

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