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SPEAKING WITH ELIZABETH FUTAS

Elizabeth Futas, the new Director of the University of Rhode Island's Graduate School of Library and Information Studies, began her job in January. Despite being faced with the pressures of the school's loss of accreditation and the myriad duties involved in getting settled in her new post, Professor Futas graciously accepted a request by the Bulletin for an interview, which was conducted by Frank Iacono of our staff.

FI: My first question concerns your view of library education. Where is it now and where is it going?

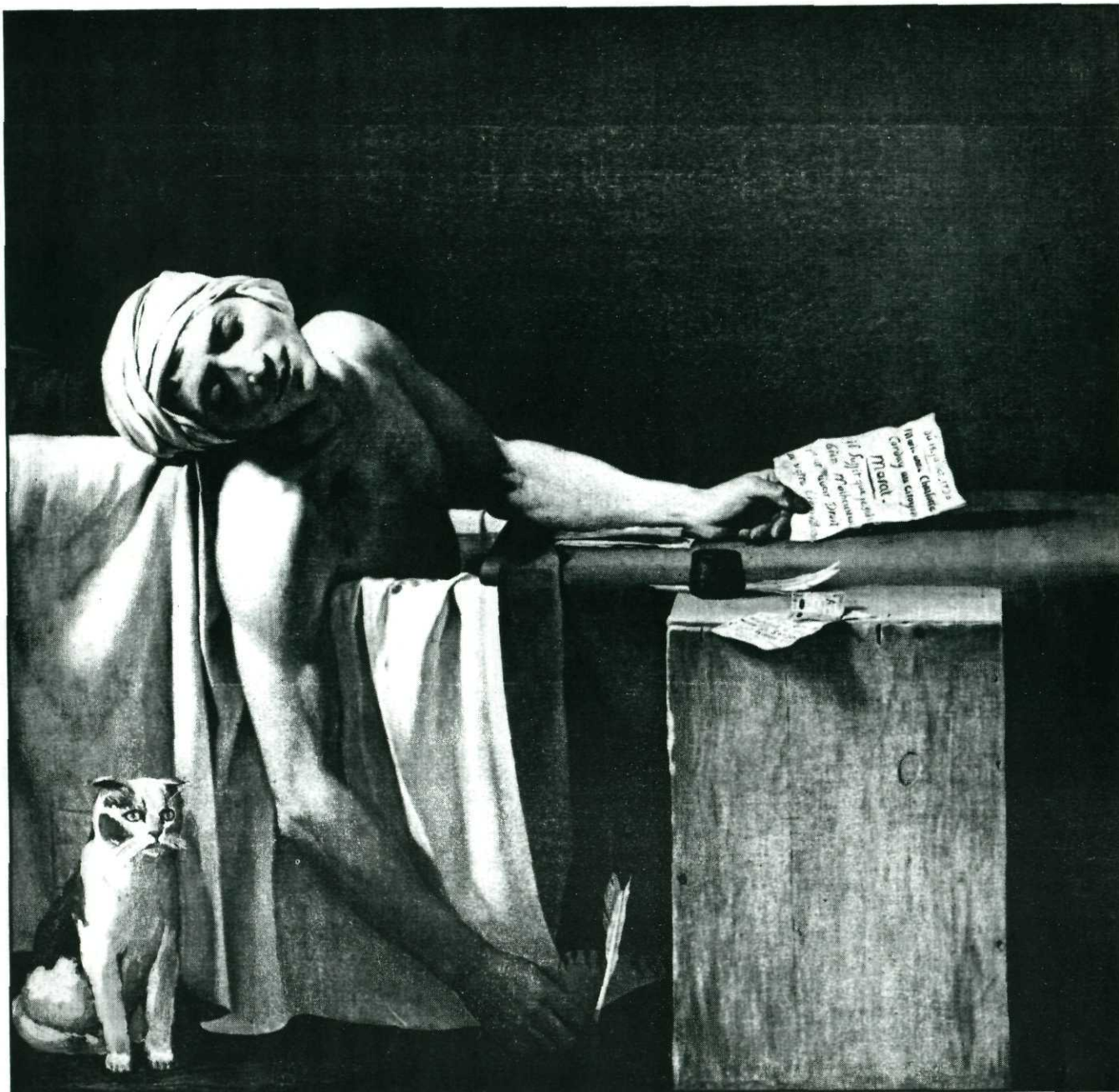
EF: For some reason, library education is in a lot of trouble right now, and I think, basically, it's because a lot of library schools are in private schools, and tuition in private schools has gone up enormously. We can't expect people, like librarians, whose salaries have never been very high, to pay \$16,000 a year tuition only to get out and get a \$17,000 a year job. That's what's happening in library education.

Pedagogically, it's been a problem because library schools have traditionally been one-year (programs). We've been adding things to the program for the last ten years -- technological things -- almost skill-type things -- because employers want people who are coming out of library school to walk into their first job knowing exactly what to do. I don't actually think that is necessarily the way it should be. If I were an employer, I'd be looking for someone who could grow in a job. I'd be willing to train them in what they had to do -- as long as I knew that they'd be able to transfer the skills they'd learned in library school when things began to change, because things change so fast in our field. The trouble

with these additions to the curriculum is that there haven't been many deletions in the curriculum and we still have a one-year program. So there's a real problem about how to fit it in. Some schools have gone to two years, but financially, I don't think most students can deal with that. Some successful two-year schools have managed to deal with this problem -- but basically we're very much into part-time. Most people now go part-time. I don't think the schools, pedagogically, have caught up with that kind of schooling...and that's a problem.

I think information is in the forefront of our entire society. We (librarians) should be in the forefront of the information society. We have the skills. The best of our lot -- and I think we have more best of our lot than do most professions -- should be in the forefront. I'm not so sure that library education is placing them there. I don't know whether the libraries themselves are restricting where they're going...but the challenge to library education is to remain relevant. We must prepare students not for the present but for the future because the present is changing very fast.

FI: You've obviously undertaken a difficult



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job here at URI. What attracted you to the position?

EF: This may sound funny because I have my doctorate in the field, but I don't like a library school that has a doctoral program. I wanted to be careful that the first program that I headed was not, in any way, a doctoral level school.

FI: Why is that?

EF: Because you concentrate all your efforts and all your resources on your doctoral students and the master's students become fodder for the doctoral program. They bring the money in to support the doctoral program, and you pay them short shrift. They're sort of secondary, and I don't think that that's healthy for the profession. I think we have to concentrate on putting out the best librarians we possible can. It's not that I don't believe in doctoral programs, but I didn't want to get involved in one. The research that we do on a doctoral level is basic research, and therefore, not practical. I think master's level people should be doing applied research, so I think that research is here in a master's program as well -- if it's a good master's program.

I wanted a program that was viable, and I think that this program is. I don't want to have too much competition. There's very little competition from the south, and Simmons, our only competition to the north, being a private school has an enormous tuition. I do not believe that if people cannot come here, because there is no school here, that they will go there. Some would, but most wouldn't be able to. I think that it's disastrous that the area would not have an alternative to Simmons.

FI: The loss of accreditation, what exactly does that mean and what must be done to regain it?

EF: We lost accreditation in January and they (ALA accreditation team) will not come to visit us for two years. The earliest we can get our report (self-study) in is November 1987. This means we have to start writing our report in November 1986 to deliver it in November 1987. In January 1988 they would meet and select a team, they would visit in the Spring of 1988, and make their decision in June. Assuming we get it back at that point, it would be retroactive to the academic year before they made the decision which would be 1986-87 -- so everybody would be covered. Should the school decide either not to go for accreditation or go for it and not get it again,

we're covered eighteen months from the time accreditation is withdrawn.

I don't want to just go for accreditation. I want to put the school in the position that it won't have trouble with accreditation again. In order to do that we have to really build a decent curriculum -- a decent program.

FI: As far as the curriculum is concerned, what specific changes do you have in mind? Will the school continue to offer the double master's in history, the double master's in public administration, and the DAL (Diploma of Advanced Librarianship)?

EF: We're temporarily suspending the DAL, and I think we may be temporarily suspending the other programs as well because there's no one in them. If we have to work for accreditation, I think we have to start by divesting ourselves of everything extraneous. Now, once we've divested ourselves and started to look at the curriculum as a whole, we may put them back. We're not saying we'll never have double master's.

FI: So the basic emphasis will be on what specific areas?

EF: I think information management is something we're going to have to emphasize. Schools -- we will always have our school certification program, and I want to beef that one up. I'd like to see more public library [programs], and I'd like to see more on special, information-agency type things. I just want the curriculum to be a whole. Right now it's basically a collection of courses that people teach rather than the courses that the students need.

FI: How active are you going to be as a teacher?

EF: I'll teach a course a semester. I'm scheduled to teach reference next fall. I thought I might teach collection development in the spring and adult services the following summer.

FI: The regional programs at UConn, UMass, and UNH -- are those scheduled to continue?

EF: We've just announced to UConn that we are pulling out. The Storrs program will end this semester. We're not allowed to teach in the regions without ten students in the class, and we're teaching two classes

with fewer than ten students. We cancelled classes and I don't want to do that anymore. What I want to do is offer required courses. We're going to teach all the required courses out in the region, starting in the fall. We're trying to go through a preregistration period so we really know what people out there want.

FI: But the regional program will continue to be a viable part (of the curriculum)?

EF: I hope so. You asked me why I wanted to come to URI -- that's one of the reasons. I find the regional program the most interesting part of the program, because it is needed and because it's interesting to try to teach that way -- difficult but interesting.

FI: Does the GSLIS anticipate providing continuing education on a larger scale for the library community?

EF: I hope so eventually, but I don't see that happening while we're in this kind of phase. It's still a goal of the program. Basically, I think we should work with other organizations to do this kind of thing. I'd like to see us do one or two workshops a year. The trouble is I'm too new to know what will go and what won't. Some of the things that I think we could have run as institutes we're going to be running as classes. For instance, we're going to be teaching conservation and the history of books and printing, in Providence, which we've never done before. One's at the John Hay Library and one's at the Athenaeum.

FI: Work experience, as far as students are concerned -- how important do you think it is? Right now there are courses that offer professional field experience, there's a practicum -- what are your attitudes toward it in general and toward, perhaps, formalizing it with a bunch of different libraries?

EF: I'm very much in favor of it, and I have started to think about formalizing it here. There are a number of students, especially the part-time students, who work in libraries already. They work in the kinds of libraries they expect to go into. I don't want to force them into internships they're not interested in. But then there are plenty who've never worked in a library. I think they do have to have internships because they don't know what to expect. What I'd like to do is to get to a point where thirty to fifty percent of the students who aren't currently working in libraries are in some kind of internship, but the internships are not for degree credit. Employers pay the students. What I'd like to do is to set them up for a period of time, say

a year, where they work on a steady basis with particular people. I'd like to have them in schools and the traditional libraries, but I'd also like to place them in information settings where research and information is very important so they could try it out before they set their whole program. What I'd suggest is that these places pay them, have them work five to ten hours a week, and that we find them some kind of paper tuition rebate -- if the University will do that. In other words, we give them some tuition rebate to make it worthwhile and the organization pays them. But, they have to be monitored. These are not [programs] where we throw them at these places and say "use them any way you want." They'll have an advisor here, and the advisor will talk with the supervisor and the student. There are to be evaluations throughout the period so that the students don't feel that they're being used as clerks. I want them to get a feel as to what a professional does in these places.

FI: The students won't have to set them up?

EF: Right, I want us (the faculty) to set it up and keep track of them.

FI: What is the role of the GSLIS in the library community?

EF: I think we have to get active in all the various associations -- not only in Rhode Island. I want an active faculty. One of the problems that happens in library education is that people begin to think that we're experts in the field. Instead of the library educators listening to the practitioners, the practitioners start listening to the educators. Now there's nothing wrong with that if both things happen. But you can't find out what's happening if your practitioners only listen and don't talk to you. I think that's a problem we face.

FI: Is there any specific kind of assistance or support that you need from the library community?

EF: At the moment, I don't want anybody to do anything because I want the University to tell me what it wants to do. At the moment, I think it's fair to wait, but watchful waiting.

FI: So your immediate plans are mostly to get the school on its feet and your long-range plans involve being relevant to...?

EF: ...to what I perceive -- and what, hopefully, the faculty as a whole will perceive -- is societal need. We are a service occupation, after all, and I think we always will be. I think there's a place for library schools in higher education, but I think it has to be in a public institution like this one.

people

GRACE LEVESQUE has been promoted to Branch Librarian at the Union Library in Tiverton.

ANN DICKSON, librarian at the New England Institute of Technology, has resigned.

bulletin board

- Suzanne LeBarron, Director of the State Library Services Division of the Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives, will be keynote speaker at URI Graduate School of Library and Information Studies Ninth Annual Gathering on April 26th. Her topic will be "Networking is People Working." The program also includes a panel discussion on networking and a reception for retiring faculty members.

- The New England Round Table of Children's Librarians of the New England Library Association and the Massachusetts Library Association announce that the annual Alice M. Jordan-Bertha Mahoney Miller Storytelling Program will feature guest storyteller Laura Simms. The program will be held on Friday, May 30th, 10 AM - 3PM at the Hotel Northampton, 36 King Street, Northampton, Massachusetts. Information is available from Diane Ramsay, Worcester Public Library, Salem Square, Worcester, MA 01608.

- Providence Public Library recently received a grant of \$120,000 from the Rhode Island Foundation for renovations at the Central Library. Work is scheduled to begin this Spring and will continue for two years. The nine million dollar project will return the main entrance of the Library to its original spot on Washington Street and provides for a one-stop central reference desk, installation of a climate control system, new electrical wiring, and ready access for the handicapped.

- The Rhode Island International Children's Festival will take place at the State House

from May 26th to June 1st. The event aims to assist the education, social and cultural development of children through the medium of the Arts (music, mime, theater, storytelling dance, creative expression, etc.). More information is available from Susan Mahoney, Executive Director, Rhode Island International Children's Festival, Inc., 150 Benefit Street, Providence, RI (277-2669).

- The Friends of the Warwick Public Library have presented the library with a compact disk player for use in the library. The library also has about sixty compact disks, representing a broad variety of music, that can be borrowed or used in the library.

- The Annmary Brown Memorial on the campus of Brown University was the setting for RILA's reception in honor of Elizabeth Futas, the new Director of URI's Graduate School of Library and Information Studies on February 26, 1986. Brown University Food Services provided the delicious refreshments for about fifty RILA members and supporters of the Library School. Also attending was a future Alumna, seven week old Juliette Dumaine, the daughter of librarians Margery and Paul Dumaine. Jon Tryon, RILA Vice-President/President-Elect introduced Dr. Futas who spoke enthusiastically about being in Rhode Island, at the Library School, and a new RILA member.

Join ALA

Now is the time to join the American Library Association. With ALA meeting in New York this summer, it is a good time for you to become an ALA member so that you can save on registration fees. In addition, you will be supporting lobbying efforts for libraries in Washington, getting discounts on ALA monographs, supporting Intellectual Freedom activities, and receiving a subscription to American Libraries. If you are a first year member, you can join for only \$30.00. Students can join for \$15.00. If you need a membership form, contact Sandra Gallup who is the Rhode Island ALA membership chair. Her phone number is 863-3408. JOIN NOW!



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SUBSTITUTE LIBRARY MEDIA SPECIALIST: Woonsocket Public School System. Must be certified as Teacher of Library Science by the Rhode Island Department of Education. Salary \$40 per day. Application available from: Louise R. Leveillee, Coordinator of Media Services, 108 High Street, Woonsocket, RI 02895 (401) 762-4440.

LIBRARIAN: Clayville Elementary School, Scituate, RI has opening for one year appointment, ½ time (17 hours weekly) for the 1986-87 school year. Contact: Superintendent of Schools: Albert B. Manning, Danielson Pike, North Scituate, RI 02857. Phone: 647-3328.

LIBRARIAN: Reference and Adult Services. Qualifications: ALA Accredited MLS and varied public library experience. Experience with CLSI and Apple micros preferred. Salary: \$19,300 - 23,500; 35 hours. Excellent benefits. Send resume and references to: Anne Toll, Director, Newport Public Library, Box 8, Newport, RI 02840.

MEDICAL LIBRARY COORDINATOR: Brown University Library. Reports to the Head Reference Librarian. Responsible for coordinating library services to the bio-medical faculty and students of the Brown Program in Medicine. Requirements: MLS degree from an ALA accredited library school; medical librarian accreditation; three years experience in a medical library with some administrative experience; experience with online systems and medical cooperative agreements; good organizational skills; and a knowledge of technological advances in medical librarianship. Appointment range: \$23,053 - \$28,750, based upon

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calendar

APRIL 10 - Rhode Island Library Film Cooperative Annual Meeting, Warwick Public Library, 9:30 AM coffee, 10AM meeting.

APRIL 15 - Veronica Cunningham of the Northeast Document Conservation Center speaks on "Book Conservation" at the URI Library's Galanti Lounge at 3PM.

APRIL 23 - Young Adult Round Table, "Nuclear Issues," Cranston Public Library, 9:30AM.

APRIL 26 - URI/GSLIS Ninth Annual Gathering of Alumni and Friends, 9AM - 4PM.

experience. Interested candidates should send letter of application, resume, and names of three references to Carol Scofield, Personnel Office, Brown University, Providence, RI 02912. In order to insure consideration, applications should be received by April 15, 1986. Brown University is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer.

VOLUNTEER: National non-profit service organization with Rhode Island based executive office needs volunteer librarian. Existing vertical files, books, serials, photographs, memorabilia by subject arrangement and volunteer staff in place. Need: cataloging, some statistical analysis and research related to new acquisitions. Contact: The Twins Foundation, P.O. Box 9487, Providence, RI 02940-9487. Telephone: (401) 274-6910.

VOLUNTEER: The Butler Hospital Nursing Department is seeking a volunteer or a student to catalog/organize their archival collection. The collection (1896-1941) includes papers, correspondence, records, minutes, lectures, and photographs of the Butler School of Nursing. The project consists of approximately three file drawers and four cartons. Anyone interested in this position or requesting more information should contact Estelle Singer, Director of Volunteers, Butler Hospital, (456-3776).

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