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## Bulletin of the Rhode Island Library Association v. 62, no. 1-2

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# Rhode Island Library Association Bulletin

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## A CONVERSATION WITH RICHARD ROBBINS

The Bulletin is pleased to present a conversation between Richard Robbins, currently a librarian at the Adult Correctional Institution and formerly director of the Pawtucket and Warwick Public Libraries, and Judith Paster, Managing Editor of the Bulletin and a reference librarian, who has worked on the staff of the Pawtucket Public Library. The conversation took place, not in an ACI library, but in the Library Office, located in the gray stone Administration Office, adjacent to the Maximum Security prison, visible from Pontiac Avenue in Cranston.

**J:** With your career in public librarianship, why did you choose to be a librarian at the ACI?

**R:** Good question. But this really is a public library, a public library with a very specialized public. The difference between this and a public library is that our public does not change as rapidly, perhaps, as do the comings and goings of a public library. Also, our materials are much more limited. But the goals are rather similar. Also, I have some interest in penology, and I thought that this would be an interesting change from the standard public library. And I do so find it.

**J:** I did a little homework before I came to see you. Though actually, I found that there's very little to read on the subject of "prison librarianship." One theme that did run through the literature emphasizes the personality and energy of the prison librarian as absolutely crucial to the success of the job.

In RQ, Rhea Joyce Rubin, says: "Without a liking and concern for people, a modicum of maturity, strong emotional security, and highly developed communicative skills, the librarian may not even survive!" That

sounds like rather high criteria! It's asking a lot. Librarians are often seen as "dry as dust" and unable to communicate. Are there special qualities a prison librarian should have?

**R:** I would say that most librarians are colorful, interesting, and exciting people! Here, though, you do have a very high stress level, working with people in trouble, difficult people. We're talking daily with people who are unhappy, who are themselves under enormous stress, whose physical existence is sometimes threatened. They are not the most uplifting people to surround yourself with. So the character of the librarian and his personality traits are important. Indeed, number one, just to survive, and to be able to sleep at night, and be able to come back the next day, can be a challenge!

Also, to work effectively does take a lot of skills. People in prison are not patient people, even though they would seem to

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have endless time. When they request something of interest to them, it's the most important thing in their life at that time. To us, it's one of a hundred, a-thousand different concerns and requests in our lives. To them, it's all important, and so his or her patience is very, very limited. Also, they have not been trained in etiquette, and reading Miss Manners every day...

**J:** They're not used to saying "please"...

**R:** Yes, they often behave in a way not the most gracious! Although, sometimes you're surprised, because even here we see all sides of the human personality. We have an unbelievable cross section of people, those who have had little schooling, and others who have PhD's. People who know nothing about the judicial system, and others, who are attorneys, and are members, or former members, of the Bar. The cross-section is remarkable, and again, as in the regular public library, you have to relate to these people on different levels.

**J:** It takes a lot of flexibility, the ability to stretch yourself mentally and emotionally, from one level to the next.

**R:** Right. Also, we have more minorities than the average public library. We have more Hispanics, more blacks.... This adds yet another dimension to what you're doing.

Also it's important to realize that we're running five libraries here, which is a major challenge in this institution. Suppose, Judith, you had a city of twenty or thirty thousand people, you'd have one library, and no branch. We are a community of twelve hundred people, and we have five libraries. So you can see what challenges there are.

**J:** Perhaps one thing you're saying is that to meet these challenges, requires a "seasoned" person, in the best sense of that word, someone who's used to dealing with a broad spectrum of personality.

**R:** I'm sure that would be an asset. Also, what is very much needed, is a "feel" for book selection; that's very high on the list of requirements for the job. Materials and selection. Very high on the list. One of the greatest needs is discarding; I mean, selective discarding. I don't mean the disposal of old things of great value that don't seem to be used. Those items can be of great importance.

There have been many amusing things found on our shelves that we have managed to discard. For example, this book on skiing was given to the library. Now, I myself, would never add this, because there are so few people here into skiing. Very important to a public library, and indeed, we're going to send it to a public library. But we have so little space that we simply cannot keep inappropriate items.

**J:** This is not to say that there's no interest in sports?

**R:** There is much less interest here in sports than I would have expected. There is not much interest. It's surprising. Perhaps that is one of the reasons so many of our people have got into trouble! I don't think you'd find any other comparable group of men, of comparable age, less interested in sports.

**J:** Why don't you tell us a little bit about your work? For most of us, including myself, it's a mystery, how you spend you day, what time you get here, what your duties are like. Do you work alone?

**R:** I have a staff of ten people, and these are all inmates, and of varying levels of competence. One is an office clerk and comes here to my office every day. The others work in the libraries themselves.

**J:** How are they selected?

**R:** They are usually selected by the director of each building.

**J:** Do they exhibit some interest in library work?

**R:** Some, yes, and some, not. I think the director tries to find people who can read, but doesn't always succeed. It's considered a "plus" job, but some inmates burn out after they've been doing it for years.

**J:** You're talking now about the clerks themselves?

**R:** The library clerk, the inmate clerks, they can lose interest. I would say, generally speaking, they're more positive than negative. And some who don't seem to have any aptitude can be trained and do a pretty good job. One inmate has no authority over others, and there's no way he can have that. If he tries to shake them up, he'd be in trouble. So you never can run good libraries when you have no real librarian, someone on the premises all the time.

**J:** You're the only professionally-trained

librarian here?

**R:** I, and the law specialist. That's one of the major challenges, our dealing with inmate staff. But considering the fact that we have only inmate staff, we do a fairly good job. The libraries play a very important part in life here.

But getting back to my routine. I come to my office in the morning, at 8 or 8:30, and, for example, tomorrow, Thursday, I would go, first thing to the High Security library. I'll go through all the checks, the metal detectors, to get in, and I will deliver there such books as I have ordered, or otherwise assembled, for them. I go in and see what else they need, check around, take a lot of requests. A great deal of our work is requests, and this is one of the most satisfying parts of the job.

**J:** The prisoners know you are coming and "prepare" for your visit?

**R:** They know the schedule very well. They will have requests ready for me. The flavor of every building is different. High Security, they're in there for the long haul. They're serious criminals, and reading is very vital for those who do read, because there's very little else for them to do. The library is vital to people here. Picture yourself, if you were here, what reading would be to you. It would be almost everything.

In one of my early days here, Judith, I was discouraged, and didn't think I really wanted to be here, and someone requested a book, and I brought him another of a similar type at the same time, and he said, "It's good somebody cares." A comment like that makes you feel worthwhile.

**J:** That kind of service, reader's advisor really, is similar to the public library's work. And even the gratitude is a common benefit for all of us in the public sector. Are there aspects of prison librarianship that are unique to it?

**R:** Well, we haven't really talked about a philosophy of prison librarianship, and there is something of a dichotomy of opinion. I think most of us feel that we should be something like a public library. However, there is some thought that prison libraries, should deal, like a prison itself, with rehabilitation, and hence, provide rehabilitative books and materials. I'm not sure anybody's really put his finger on what those materials are...

**J:** I was going to ask you!

**R:** I'm sure they would include books that would cure you in body, soul, and spirit, vocational materials, and that sort of thing. I think that anybody who's on the firing line of a library would soon give this up, and go back to the concept that we should be like a public library, and give people what they want. How can we possibly rehabilitate them?

For instance, there are people here who once engaged in tax fraud. What can you give somebody like that to reform him? Absolutely nothing. Or suppose someone, in a fit of passion, killed his girlfriend because she was with another guy? What can you do to rehabilitate him? There's nothing a library can do. So, what we try to do is keep them reading, because they are human beings, and it's food...

**J:** You keep his mind occupied. That's a value in itself.

**R:** So the minds, of course, will not rot. We feed their bodies, and this is just as important as food.

**J:** Tell us more about your daily schedule. There are five libraries. You start at 8, with the High Security library, and then, you continue with your suitcases of books...

**R:** Yes. Time is basically divided among the libraries in the five separate prison buildings, known as High Security, Maximum Security, Medium and Minimum, and the Women's Prison. I take some plastic shopping bags full of things that I've selected to each library.

**J:** Where do these books come from? ILL sources? DSLS?

**R:** The only ILL we have is what I get on my own card and take to the prison. Mainly, I buy books at Waldenbooks. When I arrive in the different libraries with my shopping bags, they surround you. They're sort of like vultures on dead flesh! They just surround you.

The standard question is "Did you bring any books today?" Well, I bring books every day I go. They see them, but they still say "Did you bring any books today?" or, "Did you bring any good books?" or, "Did you get the books that I wanted?" They will never, never forget a request. I'll say, "Please don't hold your breath. It may take months to get what you want." But still, two days later, they will ask "Have you gotten it?"

**J:** That's the way a child is, by the way. That's the one thing they think about. They remember that you promised that, and meanwhile, you're dealing with hundreds of other things.

**R:** Judith, you're right. The main thing that they're in here for is that they can't stand delayed gratification. This is why they steal, break and enter, kill people, and what not. They want things now. You get in trouble in life when you want things now.

**J:** As the old song goes, "I want it when I want it." How do the patrons accept you? It sounds as if you receive a pretty enthusiastic welcome!

**R:** Yes. Because we bring them things that they want, and we're the helpers here. We're not custodial, and can't give them punishment, so of course we are popular because we bring them good things. They're very accepting, very warm, like people in Pawtucket. I feel right at home with them.

**J:** How about the inmate staff? Do you get any resistance from the clerks?

**R:** Yes, those who have been here for years doing it, and who will be here for a long time. It's always been their library. Can you blame them? I'm a splash in the pail; I'll be gone in a year or less, probably, and "who is he to tell us what to do." Which is a bit of a problem. Also to them, it's their library, and to me, it's one part of a library system. All the books are inter-changeable. If I have people who need more Spanish books at Maximum, I'm going to take them there. Moving books from one library to another makes them absolutely furious. If there's anything any of these people hate is if any book is transferred from their library.

By the same reasoning, they despise our weeding and discarding. One clerk thought I was stealing the books to sell them! They can't understand what I'm doing. To them, a book is a book. If somebody gives them a book, it doesn't matter what it is, they won't even look at it, or have the slightest idea about it. They'll put it on the shelf, because a book is a book. This is the level most of them are at. It's most depressing.

**J:** What determines your schedule on a daily basis? Is there an "order" to it?

**R:** None, except where prisons are geographically located. These buildings, you see, are quite a distance apart. You have to drive to them. You're in your car a lot. My visits to five libraries will take the entire morning, and then I have lunch, and go to the bookstore in the afternoon, Waldenbooks often, which will take most of the afternoon.

**J:** I see the Rhode Island Laws over there. Is there a reference area in the prisons where people may go to read on their own? I have that picture of inmates reading law books and taking copious notes on their cases.

**R:** There's a legal section in each library, and in the Maximum building; it's in a separate room, several times the size of this office, and filled with law books.

**J:** That's fairly sizable.

**R:** Yes, it's a big law library. The other prisons have only a section devoted to law. One half will be recreational materials, the other law. But there are people poring over their cases, typing them up. We bring a lot of materials from the law library in the Superior Court building. I go there once a week to research cases. We're "between" law librarians at the moment, and I'm trying to meet all the legal requests myself. I've got a lot to learn. True, when someone is through with this job, he's a paralegal.

**J:** He'll know how to shepherd those cases.

**R:** Sure. He'll be like the guy who just left, legally well-trained. Right now, I'm doing two jobs badly. I can't do mine right, and I can't do the law right, because you can't do both well. You need two people. Four people to do it really well! To do it moderately well, it should be one job per person, but to do two simultaneously! I've been trying to do that for two months now, and I've just about had it. The law work is important because the cases you're getting for the inmates are almost literally a matter of life and death to them. Some inmates become "jailhouse lawyers" and very competent.

**J:** We're not talking about dumb people here. There is a great deal of potential ability.

**R:** A lot of them are very sharp. They really are. And it costs the state between seventeen and thirty thousand dollars a year to keep them here, so it is a terrible waste,

isn't it, of your money and their lives, and of the victim's lives?

**J:** You mentioned the women's prison earlier. Do the women require the same type of materials as the men?

**R:** They're more interested in the grisly murders, serial killer type thing. Really, I'm not kidding. Much more interested.

**J:** You mean they don't like Harlequin romances!

**R:** No! Certainly not! They see those things and they say, "Don't bring us that junk. We have so much of that already. We just throw it out." No. But they are interested in very much the same type of books as the guys are. Harold Robbins, Sidney Sheldon, Clive Cussler, but especially books about the psychopaths.

**J:** Ted Bundy...

**R:** Absolutely. But, we do have a number of intellectuals among the women, too. So, it is interesting to give service to the women. There's a tremendous turnover in the women's prison.

**J:** More so than men?

**R:** Yes, much more so. Except for those in for murder.

**J:** They're in for less important crimes, of shorter duration...

**R:** They're in for prostitution, that sort of thing. And as the old saying goes, they're back on the street the next week. Some are here for ten, twenty, thirty years.

**J:** Is there an average age you deal with?

**R:** The average age around here is about twenty-five, a very young population. I'm one of the oldest people around now. A very young population. The average stay here for everybody is two years. Surprising, isn't it? A short time of stay, though this counterbalances those who are in for thirty, forty, fifty. Very few people die in prison, very few. Most get out eventually, and are back on the street. This is one of the reasons it's important not to let their life here be totally inhuman. You cannot let them back on the street having been treated with only cruelty and hatred.

**J:** We were talking about rehabilitation before, but it's not really rehabilitation, but rather enrichment. Is that the right word?

**R:** I like that, Judith. I think "humanizing" establishes the place a bit, but I think "enrichment" is good. It's very satisfying to serve women because their quarters are very confined, and they have so little to do, and those who do read, find it very important.

**J:** What is the institutional structure for libraries at the ACI? Do you fall under the aegis of DSLS?

**R:** No. We fall under the aegis of the Education Department of the prison. The prison, you see, is, to a certain extent, like a school or college, it has an education department, it has teachers, faculty, principal, and the works. We're a part of that.

**J:** What are the other things that the Education Department does? Are there classes?

**R:** Oh yes, certainly, college classes, junior college classes. Some are by television; in other instances, the teachers come here. We have high school classes, or the high school equivalency course, the GED. There are also other kinds of teaching, ceramics, weaving, painting, drawing. A lot of educational activity goes on here. One way of looking at the prison is as a school.

**J:** In that connection, do you become a school library as well? Do you provide texts or reading lists?

**R:** Yes, they do have texts. Here beside me are some texts to be distributed tonight, business law. There's not too much school librarianship, really. Some of the courses that might require regular use of periodicals, are modified for prisoners so that they aren't required to use periodicals to pass the course. We don't have the Reader's Guide! Can you imagine the Xeroxing, the microfiche, forget it! Even a public library, the size of Warwick or Pawtucket, has trouble getting the periodicals it needs. So, forget it here!

Once in a while, we do get some things of a supplemental nature. Someone may be taking a course in child development, and he says, "Can you find me something else?" And I'll take a few things in. I suspect we'd have a lot more reading in our libraries, if people were not taking courses. The courses take a lot of their time, and these are not people who read easily. It keeps them busy, since everyone has a job assigned to him during the day, whether it

be an office library clerk, or a part of the litter crew around the state. They all have little jobs assigned to them.

**J:** Where does DSLS fit into the structure?

**R:** Ten or fifteen years ago, there were no libraries here at all, and DSLS got them established. They now give us money for books, and have institutional consultants who work with us, all very helpful. A couple of times a year, we go up to the Mobile Book Fair in Newton to buy books with their money. I was talking with Andy Egan just today. He and Anne Piascik, also a consultant, send me articles, such as you've brought here today. This is helpful, giving money, and providing moral support. Very helpful to us.

**J:** Is there any psychological support available, to you, or to the prisoners?

**R:** We have three or four psychologists on the staff. They may suggest books to buy, or I may ask them for emotional support. Occasionally, programs are given to the prisoners on such subjects as anger.

DSLS is still involved with programming, funding, and consultation, and have been very, very helpful. We probably wouldn't have any libraries here if they hadn't gotten it started. The law libraries have been mandated by the courts in recent years; they had to be here by court order to provide prisoners access to the courts.

**J:** That's part of the American system. We tend to get a little facile about our rights. We take them for granted.

**R:** Yes. The major thing the prisoners lose is their freedom to be out in society, but most other rights of American citizens they still have. Most people don't realize this. The major thing that's taken away from them is their freedom to be out in society, but there are other types of freedoms. Of course, sometimes, they're a little hard to exercise...however, you do have them! You have a right to avoid cruel and unusual punishment, and a right to be treated fairly, and very frequently, they take the prison to court about things just like these.

**J:** That's a part of our society, too, the litigious aspect of life now.

**R:** This is true, and these people are into litigiousness. They love it! It gives them something to do. The law librarian is


sometimes enabling them to sue us. It's a strange job!

There's constant motion here. I thought you might avoid future shock in the prison, but au contraire, it's a constant changing, and even with the prison, at the in-take center, you go to Max, you go to Medium, you go to Minimum, and then to Work-release. Within four years, a prisoner may have been in five different buildings. You get a book for somebody, and discover he's escaped or gone to another building. The movement of people here is incredible, and it's very hard to train the guards to grab the books, so they don't take them with them.

**J:** And even if they were to take them with them, one would have to be happy. Perhaps there was something in that book that they particularly responded to.

**R:** I'll drink to that. Sometimes we have to think of libraries as book distribution points. If they want to keep it because it means so much to them, or if they want to sell it to someone else for cigarettes, it's another way of looking at libraries.

**This conversation with Richard Robbins will be concluded in the next issue of the Bulletin.**



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## THE RHODE ISLAND LIBRARY STUDY: ADDITIONAL REACTIONS

Following the RILA Conference, the Bulletin received additional comments on the Rhode Island Library Study, from members representing small libraries and specialized interests. The Bulletin felt that the viewpoints expressed deserved a wider audience. The first comes from Catherine C. Hull, Director of the Clark Memorial Library in Carolina.

I represent the members of the Small Libraries Group, about fourteen libraries in rural or suburban areas. These small libraries are now in transition. While still underfunded, understaffed, and limited in resources, we are experiencing a phenomenal increase in demand for services from those moving into our communities. We want to have a vision of true community service, using whatever comes our way, for the benefit of our communities.

Traditionally, small libraries have been suspicious of state-mandated services, feeling that state agencies do not understand the demands and practicalities of our daily experiences, and do not appreciate the special character of small libraries and our professionalism. This attitude is changing.

Many of us do work on committees and voice our concerns for change and library development in the state. Others are waiting to see what changes are actually coming, and will cooperate as much as possible. All of us are concerned with the transition from the old to the new. We are strongly individual, yet this concern is a consensus. We will be deeply affected by the changes that will see us becoming automated, doing our own ILL, collecting more statistics, and so on. We are concerned about the effect this will have on our limited management time. We wonder if we will be weighted down with details, and if we can ourselves make a transition to a heavily technological existence in libraries where we are still trying to be paid fairly and scrape up money for a children's librarian.

We are concerned that

- The changes will retain a simplicity that focuses on the three main directives from Peat-Marwick--namely, service to the individual, the establishment of a multi-type library network in the state, and equality of funding. All things should serve to promote these goals.

We are concerned that

- The new legislation to implement these goals should be broad enough to allow adaptation to need, but specific enough

to safeguard desired changes, such as state funding protected from manipulation by local governments.

We are concerned that

- The new governing structure shall be truly beneficial in providing positive leadership, and that the state agency NOT become just a greater bureaucracy. Why is the governing Board now "Advisory?"

We are concerned that

- There be suitable accounting for use of state funds without unacceptable burdens placed on libraries whose staff is small.

We are concerned about

- The disappearance of regional support. Will we become more isolated in spite of technology and the Electronic Mail system?

Most of us see the positive side of the Rhode Island Study and have great hopes that the changes it brings will be positive. But we are wary, worried about the steady erosion of state services that supported small libraries in the past, and we wonder what is really being given, and what demanded in return. Trade-offs and compromises are facts of life.

But we don't want to trade-off our limited time and resources. We are concerned with that one person coming into the library, with that one request. We want a simple, uncomplicated structure that will allow our one-person (or one-professional and small support staff) library to find what that one patron needs, and still have time and energy left to get up and give Story Hour.

The second is from Louis Leveillee, Director of Media Services for the Woonsocket Education Department.

I consider it an honor to have had the professional opportunity to serve, along with

Donna Roberts, as representative of RIEMA and school librarianship on this study. The concerns of our constituency are accurately delineated in the working paper and final report.

In the latter we see that school library/media services programs are building-based and operating under the Board of Regents/RIDE. Unfortunately our standards are twenty-five years old and are inappropriate for the times. The impact of technology is upon us and our standards do not even recognize audio-visual materials.

Certification has been tightened recently, to the point that it is sometimes difficult to find qualified candidates. I speak as one who knows, having spent two months of searching this summer.

In looking towards the future, the Management Committee sees the "weakening of school libraries" as a threat, and the "organization and funding of school libraries" as a weakness. I would also add another weakness: the lack of a school library media specialist at the department. One of the goals and missions should be the promotion of standards.

Concomitant with this year-long study of library services in Rhode Island was a task force appointed by Commissioner Earhart to recommend revised school library media service standards. The report was forwarded to him in August. After review by the department, the proposal will be presented to the Board of Regents at a public hearing. At this time we would hope to have the support of RILA and of all of you.

The new standards included personnel, size of collection, budget, and space. The latter is critical since there is much new school construction planned in the next few years. The new standards would replace the current ones in the Department's Basic Education Plan and could be implemented as early as the 1989-90 school year.

We believe that the 1988-89 standards are reasonable, reflect the new national guidelines, Information Power, and truly address the issue of excellence in school and public library service.

In order to realize true networking and cooperation between all types of libraries, our programs and resources must be strong. Let us look toward the year 2000 together!

DIANE PACHECO will become Director of the East Bridgewater Public Library on February 6. Diane has worked for seven years as the Head of Children's Services in the Barrington Public Library.

TANYA TRINKAUS GLASS will become Technical Services Librarian at the Coventry Public Library. Tanya has been Librarian of Bibliographic Control at the Roger Williams College Library, and is Co-Feature Editor of the Bulletin.

BARBARA CAMADECO is the new Children's Librarian at Middletown Public Library.

JODY CALDWELL is now Reference/Collection Development Librarian at Brown University. In addition to her reference duties, she is responsible for developing collections in history, renaissance studies, medieval studies, women's studies, sociology, and population studies.

GAIL CALU recently was appointed Chief of Information and Public Relations at the Rhode Island Department of State Library Services. Formerly Deputy Press Secretary for Governor DiPrete, Gail will be involved in public relations on both a statewide and organizational level.

MARIS HUMPHREYS has been appointed Assistant Librarian/Cataloger at the Redwood Library and Athenaeum.

ISABEL RESENDE recently was named Catalog Librarian at Brown University. In addition to cataloging monographic materials in the social sciences, Isabel will be developing collections in both Portuguese and Brazilian Studies.

PHYLLIS SYLVA, who has served as State Archivist for the past twenty-one years, recently retired. She is wished well by all those who took advantage of her wealth of knowledge, friendship, and enthusiastic assistance.

CYNTHIA ST. ARMOUR recently joined the staff of the Rhode Island Department of State Library Services as Supervisor of Automation Services. She previously worked at Southeastern Massachusetts University.

RHODE ISLAND LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

PERSONAL MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL FORM

January - December 1989

NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
MAILING ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
STREET/PO BOX \_\_\_\_\_  
TOWN/STATE/ZIP \_\_\_\_\_  
LIBRARY OR AFFILIATION \_\_\_\_\_  
POSITION \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Check here if your 1988 DIRECTORY listing requires updating.

\_\_\_ Check here if you do not wish to be listed in the DIRECTORY.

Are you a member of ALA? \_\_\_ YES \_\_\_ NO

Please list below RILA committee memberships or offices held in last two years.

DUES SCHEDULE  
(Check category that applies)

| <u>Special Categories</u> |         | <u>Salaried Library Personnel</u> |             |
|---------------------------|---------|-----------------------------------|-------------|
| ___ Student               | \$12.00 | <u>Salary</u>                     | <u>Dues</u> |
| ___ Trustee               | \$15.00 | ___ Under \$15,000 -----          | \$15.00     |
| ___ Retired               | \$15.00 | ___ \$15,000 --- \$19,999         | \$25.00     |
| ___ Affiliate             | \$15.00 | ___ \$20,000 --- \$29,999         | \$30.00     |
|                           |         | ___ \$30,000 and above -          | \$35.00     |

DUES PAID \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Contribution to ALA's Washington Office \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Contribution to RILA's Continuing Education Grant \$ \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL ENCLOSED \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please send in your dues by March 31, 1989.

Make check payable to RILA and mail to: Deborah Mongeau  
University of Rhode Island  
Library  
Kingston, RI 02881

## RHODE ISLAND LIBRARY STUDY: AN UPDATE

In 1987 the governor granted \$80,000 to DSLS and RILA to do a study of Rhode Island Library services, and to develop plans for future library services.

In September 1988 the Study was released, recommending changes in four major areas: governance, funding, networking and DSLS.

In November 1988 DSLS and RILA established the Rhode Island Library Study Implementation Committee consisting of the following members: Cathy Alves, Ann Crawford, Sheila Carlson, Carol DiPrete, Dorothy Frechette, Jim Giles, Connie Lachowicz, Jean Nash, Richard Olsen, Doug Pearce, Joan Reeves, Donna Roberts, Dale Thompson, Anne Toll, Linda Walton, and Fran Farrell-Bergeron. Jim Giles is Chair of the Committee.

In November 1988 DSLS and RILA began publishing the Rhode Island Library Study Implementation Bulletin, a mechanism for keeping the library community aware of what is happening in relation to the Study, and to provide the library community with an opportunity to share ideas about the study.

In December 1988 the RILA Executive Board approved the Study and supports the recommendations made in the study.

The Implementation Committee met November 19, December 8, 15, and 28, and January 19. It agreed on the following concepts:

**GOVERNANCE:** To support a state-level governing board, rather than an advisory board, to assure the adequacy of library and information services.

**FUNDING:** To support a matching municipal appropriation base. In other words, the state will match a municipality's appropriation to its library at a set percentage. Example: Municipality appropriates \$150,000, which the state matches at 35% giving the library an additional \$52,500. This matching schedule gives the library a total budget of \$202,500. DSLS will submit appropriate figures to be included in the Governor's budget each year. The Committee supports state funds going directly to the library, not to the municipality's operating budget with the requirement of local-aid-maintenance-of-effort.

- The Committee does not support the state's matching nongovernmental funds, i.e. endowments, or trusts. Its philosophy is that each municipality support its library, and nongovernmental funds are to be used for "special projects." It does support establishing a similar state aid program for institutional libraries in state supported residential institutions.

**NETWORKING:** The Committee agreed to support the concept that the mission of networking is to expand access to information for all types of libraries.

- To support providing central support services for the Rhode Island Library Network, such as delivery of materials, telecommunications, consultant services, and access to bibliographic and other information sources.

- To support reimbursing libraries for providing services to individuals outside the library's primary clientele.

- To support developing, maintaining and accessing resource sharing potential embodied in specialized collections and services at Providence Public Library and other libraries on a contractual basis which can be provided most cost-effectively on a statewide basis.

The Committee feels strongly it should support lobbying efforts. In 1987 Senator Victoria Lederberg introduced legislation into the Rhode Island General Assembly establishing a nine member Legislative Commission to study funding of library services statewide and relative

matters. Although the Commission is not a result of the study, the Committee is working closely with it concerning funding and networking. It has established a library advisory committee to provide feedback on library issues.

The Implementation Committee is also meeting continuously with the Governor's Office, and working with it to establish library legislation which can be introduced and supported.

Congratulatory letters have been written to both Governor DiPrete and Senator Carlin. Introductory letters and copies of the revised Rhode Island Library Study pamphlet have been distributed to all legislators and the Governor's Office.

RILA now has an active Government Relations Committee chaired by Fran Farrell-Bergeron. She is also on the Implementation Committee, which insures that the two committees will be working together very closely.

Members of RILA and the Implementation Committee attended the Chamber of Commerce Legislative Luncheon and introduced themselves to members of the General Assembly.

RILA members are urged to contact DSLS to receive copies of the Rhode Island Library Study Implementation Bulletin or to clear up any questions.

The Implementation Committee will continue to meet to discuss further aspects of networking, DSLS and actual implementation.

**This summary of the work accomplished and in progress by the Implementation Committee has been provided by Linda Walton, Committee member and Bulletin staffperson.**

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### PROVIDENCE PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICES UPDATE

Among the many recent news items from Providence Public Library come the following:

- the Library's new address is now 225 Washington Street, Providence, RI 02903.

- The Library's new main switchboard phone number is 455-8000.

- telephone reference service between the hours of 12 PM and 2 PM has been reinstated. The new phone number for the Reference Department is 455-8005.

- patrons now have access to a telefax machine. FAX service will be provided, for a fee, weekdays until 5 PM out of the Patent Office. After 5 PM and on Saturdays material can be picked up at the Circulation Desk. A maximum of twenty-five pages will be transmitted at one time and prices for the service are available by calling 455-8005.

- the Library has introduced its online public access catalog, which is located in the Reference Services area, and,

- all services that had been publicly inaccessible due to renovation have been reinstated.

## calendar

FEBRUARY 13: Young Adult Round Table, "Incentive Grants for YA Programs," Ponagansett Middle School, 9:30 AM.

FEBRUARY 17: Rhode Island Interrelated Library Network Committee, Cranston Public Library, 2-4 PM.

MARCH 15: Young Adult Round Table, "Video Copyright: Law & Policies," South Kingstown High School, 9:30 AM.

MARCH 16: Freedom of Information Day.

MARCH 20-21: North Atlantic Health Sciences Libraries at New England Healthcare Assembly, Hynes Convention Center, Room 110, Boston, MA. Contact: Linda Walton, 456-3869.

MARCH 21: New England Microcomputer Users (NEMICRO) Conference to be held at the University of Massachusetts, Boston Campus. For more information contact Jeannine Uppgard, Westfield State College, Library, Westfield, MA 01086, (413) 568-3311 (x235).

## PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE PLANS EVENTS

The Public Relations Committee, newly re-constituted under the leadership of Susan Humerickhouse, is planning a number of events highlighting National Library Week, April 9-15.

Among other plans for National Library Week, the committee has:

1. Applied for a \$2,000 grant from Grolier for publicity during National Library Week.

2. Contacted Almac's Supermarkets to place the "Ask a professional, Ask a librarian" logo on its grocery bags during National Library Week.

3. Contacted Whiteco about billboard availability and cost for advertising during National Library Week. They have agreed to provide five billboards each, one set for National Library Week, the other for "The Year of the Young Reader." RILA will have to pay for the poster paper, costing approximately \$50 per billboard.

4. Contacted RIPTA about ads on its buses during the same period. The price is almost equal to that of a billboard, but less for a Public Service Announcement.

5. Sent letters to the Rhode Island Monthly and Providence Journal Magazine, suggesting that they consider an article on libraries during National Library Week.

RILA appreciates the work that the Public Relations Committee is doing on its behalf during National Library Week. Anyone with suggestions, comments, or "contacts," is urged to contact Susan Humerickhouse, at 739-5440.

## BULLETIN BOARD

- The third edition of Guide to the Rhode Island Library Community has been published by the Junior Members Round Table of RILA. The updated guide identifies local library organizations, associations and services and provides information on library laws, library joblines, and library acronyms and initialisms. To order a copy send \$5, payable to RI/JMRT, to Nancy Menaldi-Scanlan, 55 Parkside Drive, Cranston, RI. 02910.

- The Brown University Library received a grant of \$197,653 under Title 11-C of the Higher Education Act (Strengthening Research Library Resources) to convert to machine-readable form the bibliographic records for the monographs in the John Hay Library. The Title 11-C grant will fund the second year of a three year project. During the first year 70,000 bibliographic records were converted, of which 50,000 records were from the Harris Collection of American Poetry and Plays, 10,000 records were from the Anne S. K. Brown Military Collection, and 10,000 records were from other special collections. This second year will result in the conversion of an additional 52,000 bibliographic records, focusing on additional records from the Harris Collection of American Poetry and Plays and other special collections.

The Harris Collection of American Poetry and Plays is the largest collection of its kind in the world. Complementing the Harris Collection are the Asa Cushman Collection of Plays in Parts and Prompt Copies; the Koopman Collection, with its emphasis on British and American fine printing, bibliography, and prose literature; and the Lownes Collection of the works of transcendentalist Henry David Thoreau. The Anne S. K. Brown Military collection, although one of the world's best collections in the field, has hitherto had no bibliographic records nationally available to scholars. Also included in the other special collections being converted is the McLellan Lincoln Collection, one of the three strongest Lincoln collections in the United States.

The records produced through the conversion project will be loaded into the Research Libraries Group, Inc. and OCLC on-line data bases, thus making them available to scholars around the country as well as at Brown University.

## PUBLICATIONS GUIDELINES FOR THE RILA BULLETIN

The Bulletin editorial staff welcomes articles on contemporary topics of interest to any or all Rhode Island librarians, library staff, and other related personnel in all types of libraries (academic, public, school and special). Articles can be first-hand experiences, news stories, opinion pieces, observations, interviews or any other sort of

practical, current issue. If the article is an interview, the author must obtain permission from the person being interviewed to publish the interview in the Bulletin.

A manuscript should be no longer than five pages typewritten, double-spaced. All quotations or summaries of other's ideas should be footnoted. Footnotes and bibliographies should follow a standard source such as: Kate L. Turabian, A manual for writers of term papers, theses, and dissertations, 5th edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). Authors are responsible for the accuracy of their work.

Any inserts which accompany an article (photos, charts, tables, etc.) should be camera-ready (i.e. black on white) originals which can be reduced without interfering with readability. Photocopies are not acceptable.

Articles must be submitted to the Managing Editor or to a Co-Feature Editor as early as possible, but no later than the first day of the month preceding the date of publication. These deadlines are as follows:

| <u>Month of Publication</u> | <u>Deadline</u> |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| January/February            | January 1       |
| March                       | February 1      |
| April                       | March 1         |
| May                         | April 1         |
| June                        | May 1           |
| July/August                 | July 1          |
| September                   | August 1        |
| October                     | September 1     |
| November                    | October 1       |
| December                    | November 1      |

The editors will correct spelling, grammar, syntax and may rewrite a sentence or paragraph for clarification or readability. Any major changes will be cleared with the author. The author may, at that time, withdraw the article from publication. Publication dates cannot be guaranteed, but every effort will be made to accommodate all reasonable requests received from RILA members concerning the publication of material. The greater the lead time the Bulletin staff has, the more successful will be such requests.

The Rhode Island Library Association has established a minimum recommended salary of \$11.54 per hour, or \$21,000 per year for a full-time beginning librarian in 1989.

**LIBRARY DIRECTOR:** Qualifications - MLS; Administrative experience preferred. Supervisory skills and ability to work effectively with staff and public essential. Duties - responsible for all phases of library operation including materials selection, personnel administration, budgeting, programming, public relations, and planning. Salary - dependent on qualifications and experience. Send resume and letter of application to: Mrs. Virginia Sullivan, Chairman, Board of Library Trustees, Kennedy Drive, P. O. Box 136, Dudley, MA 01570.

**CHILDREN'S SERVICES LIBRARIAN (Librarian I).** For \$2M-renovated William Hall Library, due to reopen July 1989. Library serves a neighborhood population of 15,000 in a growing suburb system. ALA-M.L.S. required. Experience preferred. Proficiency in puppetry, storytelling, and/or music desirable. Responsibilities include materials selection, collection development, programming, reference, and supervision of library in absence of Branch Librarian. Schedule includes two evenings per week and every other Saturday. Starting date: April 9, 1989. Salary range: \$21,075-\$25,648. Benefits: Paid health, dental, and life insurance; 22 vacation days; 11 holidays, and provision for pension. Send letter of application and resume, including names of three references, by February 22, 1989, to James T. Giles, Library Director, Cranston Public Library, 140 Sockanosett Cross Road, Cranston, RI 02920. An Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.

The Providence Public Library has re-opened its search for the positions of Head of Reference and Special Collections librarian. Complete job descriptions appeared in previous issues of the Bulletin. For further information, please contact: Dan Austin, Personnel Officer, Providence Public Library, 225 Washington Street, Providence, RI 02903. (401) 455-8061.

**LIBRARIAN:** Bibliographic Control (Cataloging). Some reference work required. Must be available to work one evening a week and some weekends. Supervises staff and oversees automation project. Qualifications: M.L.S. from accredited library school, technical service and OCLC experience required. Automation experience desirable. Apply by February 15, 1989 with resume and three names of references to Personnel Office, Roger Williams College, Old Ferry Road, Bristol, Rhode Island 02809.

**CHILDREN'S LIBRARIAN:** Energetic, creative, service-oriented professional for planning, programming, reference, acquisitions, school liaison, staff supervision. Experience preferred. Required: ALA/MLS; knowledge of children's literature. YA interest desirable. \$19,802-\$29,411; excellent benefits; some evenings and Saturdays. Resume and references by February 9, 1989, to Director, Barrington Public Library, 281 County Road, Barrington, RI 02806.

**SYSTEMS/PLANNING ANALYST,** Brown University Library. Responsible for assisting with the maintenance and development of the Brown University online catalog system (an IBM mainframe system using software from WLN), and for user and staff training, system evaluation and documentation, trouble-shooting and problem resolution. Requirements: two years working experience with an integrated online system in a research library; excellent oral, written and interpersonal communications skills; experience with a large bibliographic utility such as RLIN, OCLC or WLN; demonstrated understanding of current and developing technologies which will affect the delivery of information services; demonstrated training skills; knowledge of computer programming. Desired qualifications: an MLS or Computer Science degree; familiarity with the WLN bibliographic utility; knowledge or experience with IBM mainframe system operating CMS or MVS. Appointment range: \$29,900-\$37,400 based upon experience. To be assured of consideration, please send letter of application, resume and names of three references by February 28, 1989. (See address below.)

**HUMANITIES COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT LIBRARIAN,** Brown University Library. Reports to the head of Collection Development. Responsible for the development of the Library's collection in Humanities, specifically Art and Art History and related disciplines; works with the Head of Collection Development in planning and implementing goals, strategies, procedures and programs for Collection Maintenance; performs some Reference duties. Requirements: MLS degree from an ALA accredited program; advanced degree in Art/Art History or related fields; at least two years experience in Collection Development in an academic/research environment; background in Collection Maintenance and/or Preservation acquired through education or experience; knowledge of Western European languages; some reference experience desired; strong organizational, interpersonal and communications skills; familiarity with on-line catalogs and other technologies appropriate to libraries. Hiring range: \$23,000-\$28,700 based upon experience. Applications received by March 31, 1989, will be given first consideration. Applications for both positions should be sent to Geneva Ferrell, Personnel Office, Brown University, Providence, RI 02912. Brown University is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer.

## editor's notebook

With this issue of the Bulletin, I suspect that I will be introducing some of you to a new figure in the library world and to others, bringing you up-to-date on the career and personality of an old library friend.

My own introduction to Richard Robbins occurred ten years ago, when, as a student in library science at Simmons, I endeavored to find a place for myself in libraries in a state and profession, both new to me.

Today, the process by which I found that place would be called "networking"! However in 1978, friends told me about other friends and acquaintances in the library field who might be helpful in giving me a "feel" for the professional territory. Eventually, this process led me to the office of Richard Robbins, then director of the Warwick Public Library.

I remember at least two sessions in which he described the kinds of libraries in the state, and the range of positions in them. He gave me a few clues on how to find a suitable position for myself in the field, one that would use what skills I had. He even encouraged me to apply for a job at DSLs, one that I didn't get!

More important, it was he that suggested that I contact the Pawtucket Public Library, offering to serve as a volunteer in the reference department while I completed my courses at Simmons. This suggestion led to my calling Ruth Corkill, then head of Adult Services at Pawtucket, and to my, not only volunteering, but being hired immediately on leaving Simmons.

Richard Robbins and I never worked at Pawtucket at the same time, but his legacy was, and still is, clearly in evidence. Rick came to Pawtucket in 1963, and found a dark dreary building, with an impoverished collection, described by the ALA as one of the "worst libraries in the country." Thanks to his dedicated work there, it remains one of the stellar libraries in Rhode Island, best-known, perhaps, for its indefatigable service to a highly varied, sometimes troubled, urban population.

There are many things I could share with you about Rick, his origins as a Philadelphia Quaker, a graduate of Harvard, and later after ten years at the Lippincott Publishing House, a graduate of Simmons. As you listen to him talk in this interview, you may want to remember his Quaker background, his family who still use "thee" and "thou," and the humanitarian orientation of the Quaker movement that included an early interest in penology.

Most of all, I think of Richard Robbins as a consummate professional in our field, a true "book person" in the best sense of those words, someone whose life is being given unstintingly to public service.

When I called Rick to ask him to do this interview, he referred to my editing the Bulletin as "a labor of love." I'm not sure how accurate that application may be, but I do know that his service to libraries, including his present position as librarian at the ACI, is indeed that very thing.

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### RHODE ISLAND LIBRARY ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE CHAIRS - 1989

| <u>Committee</u>     | <u>Chair</u>          | <u>Phone</u> |
|----------------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| Budget & Finance     | Judy Bell             | 423-2665     |
| Conference           | Carol Drought         | 739-5440     |
| Federal Relations    | Bruce Daniels         | 277-2726     |
| Government Relations | Fran Farrell-Bergeron | 434-2453     |
| Intellectual Freedom | Elizabeth Johnson     | 943-9080     |
| Membership           | Deborah Mongeau       | 792-4611     |
| Nominating           | Sonita Cummings       | 739-5440     |
| Personnel            | Ann Crawford          | 364-6211     |
| Public Relations     | Susan Humerickhouse   | 739-5440     |
| Publications         | Judith Paster         | 467-8898     |
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