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Rhode Island Library Association Bulletin

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HOW TO INTERVIEW LIBRARY STAFF by Florence Kell Doksansky

It has been said that the characteristics of a good library employee are that he/she will:

- be committed to public service,
- be underpaid,
- need to put up with conflict,
- need to get along with a variety of people,
- need to be stable but flexible,
- subordinate personal needs to those of the library,
- need a high level of patience and tolerance,
- be willing to work hard,
- and need to be mature enough to withstand long delays in meeting goals.

Where and how do we find such people? How do we tell when we do find someone who fits these qualifications, that this is the one we want for our organization? For years, many of us who hire library staff have been asking ourselves that question. In the future, hiring may become even more difficult with changing population characteristics. It has been said that up to one-half of our inner city residents may be functionally illiterate by the year 2000. I do not have answers to difficult social problems, but I offer the following observations about interviewing techniques. Though I have been giving this information for over ten years in workshops, I still find it interesting that few of these basic principles are followed in our libraries today.

Before you begin interviewing, you will need some basic preparation which I have listed in outline form below:

1. Get authorization(s) for the hiring and the salary range.

You should be fair to existing staff when you are considering what salary to give a new employee.

2. Decide how to advertise for the job.

Is this an internal posting, a regional or a national search?

Always post positions in-house. It is good for staff development and is in keeping with the spirit of affirmative action. (Know the difference between EEO and AA.)

3. Choose carefully where you will advertise.

Job "Hotlines," private personnel agencies, newspapers, professional journals, are all available, but they all have their pitfalls, either in cost or time.

4. Write a clear job description.

5. Analyze job requirements.

There must be a clear understanding of the job to be filled.

The job and applicants should be evaluated on four items: education, experience, skills (managerial, organizational, interpersonal) and personal characteristics (ability to work under pressure or ability to manage.)

6. Decide on an interviewing process.

It is important to establish who will be involved in the process. Do not exclude anyone who should be consulted. Even brief meetings with staff are worth the time.

Should there be a "search" committee? Often widely used in academic settings, it is important for such a committee to understand its advisory role.

Make it clear to all who makes the final decision.

7. Divide the applications in three piles: "nos," "maybes," and "yeses."

Send letters to the "nos:" it is only humane and a good personnel practice.

Rank and discuss the "maybes" and the "yeses" to see who will be the top candidates according to the job requirements.

Following is a discussion of the interview process itself. Of the four items listed above under job requirements, skills and personal characteristics are the most difficult to evaluate even in an interview. Skillfully-worded questions which require thought can provide insight beyond information available from the resume or letter of application. It is a proven fact that a candidate's past behavior is the best indicator of future behavior on subsequent jobs. You cannot just depend on being a good judge of character. Job-related examples from the past can be used to predict the future and eliminate errors by interviewers who rely on intuition and general impressions. Background and experience are important. Ask candidates how they have dealt with a specific situation in their past experience to indicate what they might do in the future.

1. Select the most important areas for evaluation.

While you can usually get technical skills from the resume, it is important to double check for facts. Performance skills will be the most difficult to evaluate unless you plan a structured interview process. You also are interested in their oral communication, how they deal with policies and procedures, their interaction, organization, and problem-solving skills.

2. Establish rapport: be friendly but remember, you are not interviewing candidates for your best friend!

Set the stage for a friendly exchange by talking in a comfortable setting. Interviewing from across a desk will project a coldness or hostility on your part. Talk alone and never answer phones!

3. Start with short, simple, easy questions and then move into more stimulating ones which ask for thoughts, opinions, ideas and feelings. Do not ask questions that can be answered yes or no! If you have not had a satisfactory answer to a question, repeat or re-phrase it.

4. There is an art to listening and watching.

Give personal appearance its proper weight but no more.

Body language is important. Watch for radical changes during the interview; it is abnormal to fidget during the whole interview.

5. As you begin questioning, take notes and explain why you are doing so.
 - Explain the job and its specifics to the satisfaction of the candidate.
 - Avoid leading or suggestive questions. Try to examine and discount your own prejudices, so that you aren't guiding the interview to get where you think it should go.
 - Avoid trick questions; remember there are no right or wrong answers. Remember you have specific job needs, and you want to find out how the candidate will meet those needs.
 - Plan open-ended questions to get specific past behavior relating to skills needed for the job. Relating everything to specific job/experience examples, helps you stay within the law. For those without previous experience, remember everyone has life experiences to draw on, and you will have to interpret the usefulness of those experiences.
 - Probe for past job-related experience and persist in asking for specific examples.
 - Listen and allow for silence. It is not the interviewer's responsibility to provide extensive information. In fact, relating too much information may be a way of alerting the candidate to the specific response wanted, rather than permitting the candidate to draw on his own experiences.
 - Be in control of the interview; redirect the interview as necessary. You can end the candidate's rambling by beginning to talk at the same time. Say that "that was an interesting story" but go on to your next question.
 - Look for contrary evidence. If you get a consistently one-sided or poor picture of one trait, ask a question that might offer the reverse information. For instance, if you are getting the impression that the person doesn't follow directions, ask when he did follow procedures to get a more balanced view. Ask for the negative too. If a person appears very decisive, ask when he might have had a problem with that decisiveness.
6. Encourage the applicant to ask questions.
7. Evaluate answers and interview process. Candidates should be evaluated on their:
 - ability to adjust to the job environment.
 - chance of being accepted by superior and peers.
 - ability to do the work.
 - interest in doing the job.
 - likelihood of remaining with the organization.
 - potential for growth and development.
8. Other factors you should be aware of are: energy level, motivation, mental ability, and maturity. Always check both written and personal references.
9. Rank and choose a final candidate. Do not write letters to other candidates whom you have interviewed until you have written confirmation of acceptance from your chosen candidate. Whatever the final decision, document it well. Relate any rejection to the formal requirements as outlined in the job description.
10. Remember that the three main purposes of an interview are:
 - to determine how well qualified the applicant is for the job.
 - to give the applicant enough information to make the decision to work for you.
 - to make a friend for the organization.

The Bulletin feels that the following Appendices are valuable to interviewers:

APPENDIX A

Questions to Ask:

For instance, if you want to find out if someone has:

Planning skills: "ask for an example of a busy day and how they handled it."

Tact: "Think of a problem person and how you handled them."

Willingness to follow procedures: "Describe a situation in which you thought it was justifiable to break policies or alter standard procedures."

Timeliness: "Tell me about a time when you made a quick decision that you were proud of."

"Follow-through": "Give me an example of an important goal you set for yourself in the past and how successful you were with it."

"When you had to do a job that was particularly uninteresting, how did you deal with it?"

Flexibility: "You have heard of the expression 'roll with the punches!' Give me an example of when you felt you had to do that when working with a difficult person."

Communication: "What experience did you have with miscommunication with a patron or a fellow employee, and how did you solve the problem?"

Organizational skills: "Tell me about a time when an upper level change or policy decision held up your work, and what you did about it?"

"What are some of the major obstacles that you had to overcome on your last job? How did you deal with them?"

Initiative: "Describe a situation in your past job when you were able to schedule your own work, and what you did."

"Describe a situation where you had to set a policy where there had never been one before."

Ability to relate to supervisor: "Describe a time when you had to relate some unpleasant feelings to a supervisor and what happened."

"In your current position what types of decisions do you make without consulting your boss?"

Management style: "Can you give me an example when you came up with a clever way of motivating someone?"

Personal skills: "What kind of things make you angry, and how did you react to those situations?"

Consistency in previous positions: Get the real story behind each job change. Don't accept platitudes or incomplete answers. If you can't elicit an answer, draw the obvious conclusion. Do provide some rationale for probing questions: "I notice a two year's gap in your resume. Is there anything I should know about that time?"

APPENDIX B

Questions Not to Ask:

1. Titles, names are sometimes discriminatory. Cannot ask "did you ever work for an organization under another name"? Cannot ask original name if changed by law. Cannot ask a woman for title: Ms., Miss, Mrs., or maiden name.
2. Address and birthplace - Can ask present address; may not ask where born or where relatives or spouse may have been born.
3. Citizenship or national origin - Can ask if US citizen or if there are any work restrictions. Cannot ask where citizenship was acquired, nor national origin of applicant or any relatives.

4. Marital or family status, children - Cannot ask any questions pertaining to marital status or children.
5. Race or color - Cannot ask any questions, including color of eyes. Cannot have a place for a photograph on the application.
6. Sex - Not legal to ask unless bonafide occupational qualification; e.g. women's wash room attendant.
7. Pregnancy, birth control or menopause - Cannot ask any question about these.
8. Religious creed - All questions are illegal.
9. Physical handicap - May ask "Do you have a disability which would limit your ability to do the job?" It is legal to ask for an examination. Cannot ask the applicant to list disabilities or use a checklist on an application. Cannot ask about past workman's compensation.
10. Age and birthdate - Illegal to ask questions concerning age.
11. Language - Can ask how many languages known and how well. Cannot ask language commonly used, native tongue, what family uses, or how they were learned.
12. Arrest and conviction - Cannot ask unless job-related.
13. Height and weight - Here the employer must be able to prove that certain requirements are necessary for doing the job.
14. Military experience - May ask if the person has been in the US Armed Forces. Cannot ask about type of discharge.
15. Education - Courts have found non-job-related requirements a major area of illegal discrimination.
16. Experience - Same applies as in #15; training and experience questions must be job-related.
17. Relatives and emergency notification - May ask for a person to be notified in case of emergency. Cannot ask specifically for a spouse, children or any other relation; cannot ask if name given is related.
18. Organizations - Cannot ask for clubs or any organizations the applicant may be a member of.
19. Credit rating, charge accounts, name of bank, ownership of home or car - Unlawful unless it can be shown as a "business necessity."
20. Place of business of friends or relatives - Cannot ask.
21. Equal pay - It is illegal to offer a female applicant a lower salary than a predecessor of equal qualifications and experience or than was offered to another male applicant with equivalent background.
22. Notations on candidate's resume or application - Nothing should be written except:
 - a. Date to begin work, department, salary.
 - b. Job-related reason for rejection such as inability to do work, inability to work required hours, not legally permitted to work in the US, no working papers or work permit, obviously under influence of intoxicants or drugs at time of interview.
23. References - May ask for work and experience references, may not ask for a clergy's reference.

REMEMBER: Unintentional discrimination is considered as unlawful as intentional discrimination.

Florence Kell Doksansky is Assistant University Librarian for Public Service and Collection Development at Brown University. A widely-recognized authority in personnel issues and management, she spoke on "Tips for Interviewing Library Staff" at the Massachusetts Library Association's Conference in May 1989.

THE NELA EXPERIENCE: RHODE ISLANDERS REPORT

As many Rhode Islanders were involved in the NELA Conference this year, and many attended the event for the first time, the Bulletin asked several RILA members to relate their experiences.

**Charlotte Schoonover, NELA Councilor
Librarian, South Kingstown Library**

The 1989 New England Library Association's Conference took place on September 24-26 at the Sheraton Tara Hotel in Springfield, Massachusetts, with over one thousand registrants attending. Rhode Island's own Dick Olsen, Adams Library, Rhode Island College, was this year's Conference Chairperson.

Some Conference highlights:

For the first time, RILA sponsored a chartered bus to the conference. Eighteen people enjoyed the one-day expedition on Monday, September 25. Thanks go to John Fox Cory, Cranston Public Library, and Diane McHugh, South Kingstown Public Library, for their help in organizing the trip.

On Sunday, September 24, the "Emerson Greenaway Distinguished Service Award" was given to Elinor Hashin, former NELA President, and now working with OCLC.

The Best Reference Books exhibit was organized and staffed by Rhode Island librarians. It was viewed by 318 librarians at the conference. Thanks go to organizer Janet Levesque, Cumberland Public Library, and the following staff: Maria Baxter, Cumberland Public Library; Judy Bell, Jamestown Philomenian Library; Jackie Cooper, Providence Public Library-Rochambeau; Ann Crawford, Cross Mills Library; Susan Dunn, Warwick Public Library; Catherine Hull, Clark Memorial Library; Wendy Knickerbocker, Adams Library, RIC; Helen Mochetti, Westerly Public Library; Eileen Socha, George Hail Library.

On a lighter side, the NELA Basketball "Shoot Out" was held on Monday evening. Rhode Island was well represented by the following enthusiastic team: Cathy Alves, Coordinator, Island Region, Judy Bell, Jamestown Philomenian Library, Dick Olsen, Adams Library, RIC, and Doug Pearce, Warwick Public Library.

**Wendy Knickerbocker
Adams Library, Rhode Island College**

Every year NELA awards an all-expenses-paid trip to its convention to one librarian from every state. This year I was the lucky recipient from Rhode Island.

I was able to be there for all three days, so I visited the exhibit booths, socialized, helped out at registration and at the RILA Best Reference Books exhibit, and still found time for workshops. I met new people at almost every meal, and participated in several "how we do it good" exchanges. I found such informal information-sharing nearly as valuable as workshops.

I attended five workshops over the three days. One was on new CD-ROM products and CD-ROM networking. We have several CD-ROM databases in our library, so I was interested in hearing about the future. Another was on the FBI's Library Awareness Program, which was thought-provoking and somewhat unsettling. A third was on how to provide library services without any money; the three speakers had several innovative suggestions for survival.

Since I am a cataloger, Monday morning's workshop on AACR2 Revised was probably the most important one for me. The speaker, who was from LC, was very good, and he filled us in on several changes that LC either has already implemented or is considering implementing. I was able to bring useful information back home to our library. Another important workshop for me was Tuesday afternoon's session on online authority control, since our library is planning to have an online catalog in the near future. The speakers described their experiences and problems with online authority control, and we came away fortified with new information and only slightly daunted.

I found the NELA Conference to be personally broadening and professionally en-

riching. The workshop selection was varied, and there was something there for everyone. There was plenty there for me, and I am grateful to those who made it possible for me to attend.

Tanya Trinkaus Glass
Coventry Public Library
Bulletin Co-Feature Editor

The following programs, given on Monday, September 25, are of note:

AACR2 Revisited. Robert Ewald of the Library of Congress Office for Descriptive Cataloging Policy gave a presentation/discussion of the revised rules from the Library of Congress' perspective. From a cataloger's point of view, it was an interesting presentation for two reasons. First, there were explanations of some rules and the reasons for the changes or the reasons for LC's not changing some things. For example, the decision was finally made to change headings' format only when absolutely necessary and to use variants for minor serial title changes, both to avoid the cost involved in changes. International harmony is much more important now as the use of LC's data base expands. The French will establish their corporate titles, for example, and changes will have to be made much more responsibly. LC will work with ALA on all rule changes and in dealing with new media.

Secondly, the discussion with Mr. Ewald gave some interesting insights into the workings of LC's descriptive cataloging department. It is located in a building two city blocks long in Washington, DC. Catalogers are either descriptive catalogers or subject catalogers. The descriptive catalogers use handwritten workforms, insert them into each book, put each onto a book truck, which is eventually sent to the subject cataloging department for subject headings and call numbers (one cataloger does Dewey numbers; another does LC numbers). Then the workform is input by data entry personnel. This process means two weeks for one book to be cataloged. The new trend, experimental only in some subject sections, is to have one person catalog the book from beginning to end, and that person may even be permitted to input the information directly online! As Mr. Ewald said, it is a big step for LC to change workflow that has existed for years, when most have probably done this "new" system for years.

This program was sponsored by the New England Technical Service Librarians.

Libraries and Librarianship in the Peoples Republic of China. A slide presentation by Robert Stueart of Simmons College, who has consulted and lectured in China, was very interesting for insight into Chinese culture, politics, and social structure. Dr. Stueart's contact with Chinese students who had attended Simmons gave an additional insight into the situation in China since the June 4 turmoil. However, there was little discussion and few slides of Chinese libraries. One slide did show a reading room very well-used by students - waiting room only.

The Video Librarian. Sponsored by the Media Section, Randy Pitman, editor and publisher of Video Librarian, gave some interesting insights into selection issues in different video collections such as: classic fiction versus feature films versus childrens, non-fiction and how-to's versus fiction, and what role the library video collection should play in the community compared to the commercial video rental stores. Several questions were raised including: rental fees, weeding, access by minors, censorship and different viewpoints, multiple copies, loan periods, and the budget.

Circulation of videos in most libraries averages 1/4 to 1/3 of all circulation of library materials, yet the budget for purchasing videos is normally much lower, often as low as 5%. If the local video store has feature films, good or bad, should the library supply the non-fiction, classics and childrens videos, all purchases being based upon reviews as most book purchases are? Sometimes a video works better than a book, and funds should be switched from books to videos in such a case: i.e. learning a golf swing is easier from watching a video than from static photos in a book.

Loan periods vary. Non-fiction is often the same as books. Learning how to quit smoking in twenty-one days probably should circulate for three weeks. Fiction tends to have a much shorter loan period. It was an interesting program, bringing up questions which are now being asked as video collections expand in most libraries and as some collections are being challenged for their contents.

Rita H. Warnock
Curator of Broadsides,
John Hay Library, Brown University

Together with many other librarians from Rhode Island I went to Springfield by bus, chartered for this occasion, to attend sessions on Monday, September 25, 1989. We left the Cranston Public Library at 7:00 a.m. and returned to it shortly after 7:00 p.m. In between those hours lay an interesting conference day.

The first session I attended was "AACR2 Revised". Robert Ewald of the Library of Congress Office of Descriptive Cataloging provided very useful information on latest revisions in cataloging, proposed changes and reasons behind some of these changes. The audience's questions were numerous and attested to the need for sessions like these.

The next session on my agenda for the day was "FBI Library Awareness Program: What is it?" I had anticipated this program for some time. The panel was to consist of C. James Schmitt, past chairman of the American Library Association Intellectual Freedom Committee (to many in the Rhode Island library community also known from his tenure as Librarian of Brown University), and a representative from the Federal Bureau of Investigation. While Jim Schmitt was to present ALA's viewpoint on the FBI Library Awareness Program, the FBI representative was to voice the FBI's perception and viewpoint in this matter. Once gathered for this session, we found out that no FBI representative was present. Michael York, NELA's president, was there to explain. An interesting story in itself, the gist of the matter was that the FBI's hierarchy, after first agreeing to send a representative, reneged at the last minute. Their claim was that there was no value in further discussion of their Library Awareness Program.

While one would have liked to have heard the FBI's explanations and point of view, Michael York is to be commended for the excellent alternative offered to us. Instead of the FBI's representative, he was able to get Quinn Shea of the National Security Archives. The program was moderated by Maureen Killeran.

Jim Schmitt sketched the course of events of the developing drama of the FBI Library Awareness Program. He began with the first report of a visit by the FBI, which took place

at Columbia University Library in 1987, continued with ALA's Office of Intellectual Freedom's inquiries, the Federal Bureau of Investigation's responses, and concluded with mentioning resulting hearings, legislation, and ALA's involvement in these developments. We were reminded that the FBI's Library Awareness Program is not tabled yet, and that the library world must continue to be vigilant and watch out for any renewed attempts at curtailment of first amendment rights by the FBI.

It was pointed out that the FBI admitted to twenty-one visits to libraries in the past. Despite their claims, they have been unable to give any plausible reason that a threat to national security existed. Additionally they have not been able to establish a valid cause for their action. Their action has given cause for concern. Fundamental rights have been assailed, among them violation of the rights of libraries. Protection by law of the privacy rights of librarians, as well as guaranteed First Amendment rights for aliens have been disregarded. Ethical responsibilities that librarians have toward their users have come under siege.

In order to protect oneself, the interests of the library and the users, and to uphold one's ethical responsibilities, we were urged to insure that we be informed and become knowledgeable on:

1. The ethical responsibility of librarians.
2. State laws and local ordinances pertaining to libraries. (Editor's Note: See RILA Bulletin, v.62, n.9)
3. Library policies.

The next panelist to speak was Quinn Shea. He related the experiences of the National Security Archives with the FBI as a result of a suit by the Archives and the People for the American Way against the FBI to obtain the documents related to the agency's Library Awareness Program and told of the FBI's record of compliance or non-compliance in this matter.

Quinn Shea underscored the laws of our country which were instituted to uphold our democratic form of government with its guarantees of certain inalienable rights, helping to distinguish us so favorably from other countries. The FBI, under the mantle of its Library Awareness Program, has

disregarded these laws when investigating libraries, has mocked the country's system and has tampered with respect for our laws. Shea urged coalition in the interest of protecting the values of our rights and advocated that the profession support measures which will help to guarantee these rights. ALA's endorsement of the House resolution to limit FBI rights, introduced by John Edwards, was given as an example of such support.

I believe every single one of us attending this session left in an introspective mood.

Another noteworthy session was a panel discussion: "Ethical Issues in Library Service," held in the afternoon. Patricia Schuman of Neal-Schuman Publishers moderated, four Rhode Island library administrators - Madeline Nixon, Carol Terry, Dale Thompson, and Elizabeth Futas - formed the panel, while a fifth - Fay Zipkowitz - posed the questions. It was a very lively session. The panelists and the attendees wrestled with the question of ethics when dealing with issues of the 1980's. The Code of Ethics for Librarians provides the standards for our profession and is a guide to follow when considering obligations toward one's public and institutions. Considered were accountability, institutional censorship, the difference between serving and self-serving information dissemination, the role and perception of confidentiality, as well as acceptable and non-acceptable endorsements given by professionals. As one can imagine, there were many opinions, a host of questions, and agreements and disagreements. It was a thought-provoking session.

Every program of the sessions I attended was well-presented and give food for thought. What better endorsement can a conference have?

Howard Boksenbaum, Chief of Library Planning, Development & Information Services, DSLS

Discovering Library Architecture: a Review

HBW Associates offered "Discovering Library Architecture" as a post-conference session of NELA's annual meeting September 26-28. I attended at the very beginning of my tenure as Rhode Island's state building consultant, feeling remarkably ignorant and ill-prepared to venture into the complex waters of architecture and engineering.

Richard L. Waters (the W in HBW) and architect Hyman (Hy) Myers of the Vitetta Group -- Architecture, Engineering, Planning, Interior Design -- presented two days of captivating workshop, ranging broadly over a host of topics. The workshop's content was based in the presenters' deep and varied experience and their research into the library building arena. Each session was packed with facts and opinions (clearly labelled), supported by almost always well-prepared slides and handouts. The two hosts worked well together in representing two often unsynchronized viewpoints and incorporating reactions and questions from the small audience, resulting in a rich and rewarding learning experience.

Individual workshop sessions, by and large, represented their self descriptive titles: "Renovation/Remodelling/Restoration: What? How? When?," "The Pitfalls...," "Architecture and Interior Design," "Cost Estimating and Financing Your Project," "The Building Program," and "Selecting and Working with Architects, Interior Designers and Consultants." In addition, Hy presented a series of slides exhibiting examples of the architect's creativity in renovation and design of a number of library and non-library buildings, and Richard exhibited a slide show of buildings to which HBW had contributed, with commentary on each.

Although the most instructive aspect of the workshop to me was the overview of the entire construction process, the welter of detail presented was invaluable as well. The overview was summed up in an ingenious phase/service matrix developed by Vitetta Group illustrating in nine phases, eighty-six building consultants involved in the construction process. The matrix shows what services are invoked at what point in the process, which services are considered basic, as opposed to additional services, and opened discussion of "who does what when."

Detail ranged from floor-loading factors for various functions through the impact of a space's shape on its useability to specific cost considerations and tips on types of finishes that ease maintenance. Handouts were profuse, including such items as a sample RFP, a guide to selecting an architect, and an extensive bibliography. It's difficult to think of anything that was left out of this rich, comprehensive introduction to building libraries; looking back, it is hard to recall that it fit into only two days.

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The Rhode Island Library Association and the RILA Bulletin are grateful to Joe McGovern of DSLS for his gifts in photography and his sharing them with the library community. Joe supplied the Bulletin with his photograph of the Library Legislation's signing, which appeared in the October issue.

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HARRIET LAPOINTE is the first recipient of the Linda Aldrich Leadership Award presented by the Rhode Island Educational Media Association, recognizing her many contributions to the library-media profession. Harriet is also current President of RIEMA.

MARGARET LAWLOR recently began work as Slide Cataloger at Roger Williams College's Architecture Library.


MICHAEL LLYWELYN PRICE has been named Librarian and Executive Director of the Providence Athenaeum. He comes to his new post from the Bennington (VT) Free Library, where he had been Director since 1984.

HELEN SCHMIERER recently was appointed Library Systems/Planning Analyst at Brown University. She comes to Brown from the University of Chicago Library where she served as Bibliographic Database Coordinator and Head Serials Librarian.

THOMAS SHANNAHAN is the new Director of the Central Falls Public Library. Tom is a Central Falls native and is completing work on his MLS at the University of Rhode Island.

ANN ATTAR, who has been working part-time in the Reference Department of the PPL, became a full-time librarian as of October 2.

BRUCE "DOUG" SWISZCZ will become Technical Services Librarian at the East Providence Public Library. He leaves the Catalog Department of PPL effective November 3.



We encourage browsing.

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244 Thayer St.
Providence, RI
Mon-Fri 9-6
Sundays 12-6

people

BRENDA BARUCH was appointed Catalog Librarian at Brown University for a one-year period beginning July 1, 1989.

RICHARD BIDNICK recently was appointed State Librarian at the Rhode Island State Library.

RONALD FARK was appointed Head, Reference Department at Brown University effective August 1, 1989. He previously was head of the Circulation Department at Brown.

ROBERT FERRER was named Director of Audiovisual Services at Roger Williams college Library in August.

ELIZABETH FUTAS, Director of URI's GSLIS has been named Acting Dean, College of Arts and Sciences at URI for the period January 1, 1990-June 30, 1990. While Liz is serving in her new position, GSLIS Professor **FAY ZIP-KOWITZ** will serve as Acting Director of GSLIS.

calendar

NOVEMBER 13-19: National Children's Book Week.

NOVEMBER 16: YART, "Humanities' Programming for Young Adults," Cumberland Public Library, 9AM coffee, 9:30 meeting.

NOVEMBER 28: Coalition of Library Advocates (COLA) Fall Program, 5-7 PM, William Hall Library, Cranston.

JANUARY 6-11: ALA Midwinter Meeting, Chicago, Illinois.

Anyone interested in the purpose and mission of the public library in the United States must read and react to Charles Robinson's feature article in Library Journal, September 1, 1989.

Whereas the tone of the article is often biting, and indeed baiting, its thesis is pretty clear. According to Robinson, public libraries assisted by various ALA roundtables, are elitist institutions, based on academic libraries, which are out of touch with their plebeian constituents. Public libraries have become conservators of arcane and useless collections, overly subscribed to OCLC and similar automated services, and staffed by second-rate academic librarians who serve at the behest of elitist Boards of Trustees.

Though Robinson apparently has impeccable credentials as a librarian, including assisting Emerson Greenaway at the Philadelphia Free Library and presently serving as director of the Baltimore County Public Library, one tends to wonder how much time he has truly spent "on the floor" of public libraries. Can he truly believe that "few--of our readers--ever use interlibrary loan"? Has he ever spent time in a busy reference department of a city library, where ILL forms consume close to thirty-percent of one's time? Did he ever ask himself where those requests eventually were filled, and how they arrived to fulfill the needs of those lowly public patrons?

Whereas if Robinson were present here and could be called upon to justify his attacks on Boards of Trustees, academic librarians generically, and the ALA specifically, I can but cite three reactions I have to his remarks, reactions all based on experiences I have had here in a variety of libraries in Rhode Island:

1. There is no single public library paradigm. Many of our large urban libraries serve different functions. The Pawtucket Public Library concentrates on best sellers, and an ethnic collection focused on current materials in Polish and Spanish. The Providence Public Library must buy materials to serve someone like me, who wants the latest work on Glenn Gould or Marc Blitzstein.

Let us assume that there are public patrons who cannot afford to subscribe to the Brown University Libraries. Should that patron be denied access to such materials? In order for

Pawtucket to buy those best sellers, some other library must buy the more "scholarly" titles, for, believe me, someone in the state of Rhode Island, will want them.

2. All public libraries rely, eventually, on a "central" agency. Someone has to function as a repository of the past. Robinson may never have needed "radio repair books from the 1940s," but there is a constant call for Sams' Facts, not only at the PPL, but in Pawtucket, and, interestingly enough, Sams does not exist at Brown or any other academic library that I know of.

And as regards "third-rate novels from the 1930s," one must remember how ephemeral all literature truly is. I suspect that the Danielle Steels of today are the discards of tomorrow. However, there is a chain of thought in American Studies that says that one can learn a great deal about any period of time by examining what people were reading. How can we know that without the books themselves? A "third-rate" novel of Vicki Baum or even Hans Christian Andersen (yes, PPL holds them both) might tell us something about ourselves in that era.

3. Last, and as an outgrowth of my reactions above, I feel that Robinson denigrates the public library patron. I maintain that there are persons within the public sector who are interested in research, may be free-lance researchers and writers, may be antique radio restorers, may be interested in "old songs," may even be interested in Thoreau's "On Civil Disobedience." As public librarians, we owe it to all of these patrons, as well as to those who want recipes, Danielle Steel, and Dr. Bernie Siegal, to give them what they want and need.

I do agree with Robinson's statement that "We desperately need a common vision of public library services..." I do agree that smaller libraries do serve their publics well, but I also know, that working in those smaller libraries, one needs access to larger collections, and that many of those patrons asking questions in smaller libraries, need knowledgeable and sympathetic answers to those questions. Yes, I believe that we need McDonald's. Some of our patrons also need Lutece.

bulletin board

- A National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) grant of \$2,029,845.00 has been awarded to the Research Libraries Group, Inc. "to microfilm more than 34,000 volumes in humanities collections at member libraries at Brown, Emory, Florida, Iowa, New York, and Northwestern Universities, Dartmouth, College, the New York Historical Society, and Columbia Teachers College." The three-year grant begins on September 1, 1989. Brown University Library's share of the grant is \$288,000. The library will film 6,000 19th and early 20th century titles from two of its finest collections: the Harris Collection of American Poetry and Plays and the mathematics collection.

- For librarians concerned with developing services for their Hispanic communities, the American Library Association (ALA) has published a set of guidelines. The basic manual "Guidelines for Library Services to Hispanics" was prepared by the Committee on Library Services to the Spanish Speaking of ALA's Reference and Adult Services Division. The guidelines are intended primarily for administrators of small-to-medium-sized institutions and were written in collaboration with REFORMA (the National Association to Promote Library Services to the Spanish Speaking). For a copy of "Guidelines for Library Services to Hispanics," send \$1

payable to the American Library Association and a self-addressed stamped envelope to RASD, American Library Association, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611.

- The third edition of the Intellectual Freedom Committee's Handbook will be available at the RILA Conference, November 6. Extensively revised, the Handbook is available without charge (donations accepted!) to all public libraries. Otherwise, cost of the Handbook is \$5.00. Contact Beth Johnson, IFC Chair, Cranston Public Library.

jobline

The Rhode Island Library Association has established a minimum recommended salary of \$12.36 per hour, or \$22,500 per year for a full-time beginning librarian in 1989.

AUDIOVISUAL LIBRARIAN/ASSISTANT DIRECTOR: Responsible for selection, acquisition, and cataloging of adult audiovisual materials. Direct microcomputer operations for library use and public access. Responsibility for adult reference work one night weekly and some weekends. Provides administrative and technical assistance to the director and assumes authority over library activities in the absence of director. ALA-approved masters degree in Library Science; 3-5 years experience in public library work. Starting salary \$23,556. Position available January 15, 1990. Please send letter of application and resume by December 1, 1989 to Virginia A. Carter, Library Director, Coventry Public Library, 1672 Flat River Road, Coventry, RI 02816.

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