

University of Rhode Island

DigitalCommons@URI

RILA Bulletin

Rhode Island Library Association

5-1994

Bulletin of the Rhode Island Library Association v. 67, no. 5-6

RILA

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/rila_bulletin

Recommended Citation

RILA, "Bulletin of the Rhode Island Library Association v. 67, no. 5-6" (1994). *RILA Bulletin*. Book 232.
https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/rila_bulletin/232https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/rila_bulletin/232

This Book is brought to you by the University of Rhode Island. It has been accepted for inclusion in RILA Bulletin by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@URI. For more information, please contact digitalcommons-group@uri.edu. For permission to reuse copyrighted content, contact the author directly.



Rhode Island Library Association Bulletin

Volume No. V. 67 N. 5 & 6

ISSN:0146-8685

May/June 1994

Are Librarians an Endangered Species?

An endangered species is one whose populations are so reduced that it is threatened with extinction; whose replacement rate is too low to sustain survival; whose environment or ecosystem is threatened with elimination through radical change; whose habitat has been destroyed or degraded by development from external sources; and who may be forced to move to a new habitat or to adapt to a changed environment in which it may not thrive.

Fay Zipkowitz first posed this question about a year ago, and we thought it might be interesting to ask different folk to respond. What follows are a number of "takes" on the nature and future of librarianship.

Marshall Keys — I belong to one of those health maintenance organizations where your doctor wants you to take responsibility for your own health. So when I have my biennial physical and am told once again that my blood pressure could be better and that I really ought to lose some weight, the doc usually offers me a referral to a nutritionist to educate me about weight control. This pretty much misses the point. I don't have an information problem, I have a behavior problem. I know what I ought to eat and what I ought to avoid, but I have a problem *doing it on a day-to-day basis, even when I know I am endangering my health and threatening my longevity.*

When I look at whether librarians will survive as a species, I see pretty much the same problem. We librarians *know* what we need to do to survive, but we have a hard time changing our day-to-day behavior.

We know that the future for information (not recreation) in libraries is electronic, but how many of us make time each and every day to educate ourselves about changing information technologies? How many of us spend as much time educating our masters – trustees, deans, city officials – about our needs for information technology as we do educating them about our needs for staff and equipment? How many of us have given as much publicity to our library's connections to the information highway as we have to our story hours?

Competition for the information dollar of the public – individually and collectively – is already hot and heavy. Our competitors for the loyalty of our users include the

telephone company, cable television, newspapers, and services like America Online and Prodigy. We know we should rethink the way we deliver services in light of this competition (they are accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week), but it is often a lot easier and more pleasant to read the book reviews in *Library Journal*.

Species decline because they cannot adapt with sufficient rapidity to changing conditions. Society needs institutions that do what libraries do; society needs people to do what librarians do. If libraries are to continue to be the institution through which communities and institutions share access to information and if librarians are to be the people who guide users through that information, it behooves us to begin adapting a bit faster. The world would be worse off without us.


*Marshall Keys is the Executive
Director of NELINET, Inc.*

Howard Boksenbaum — No, we're too important ...


A full page ad caught my eye as I browsed a recent *New Yorker* magazine. "Thanks to Sprint, the world's largest information networks are available even to the smallest library", it bragged. Libraries are important, and now everybody wants to jump on the bandwagon.... Universal literacy is now among the nation's primary goals for the coming century.... A poll conducted for the Benton Foundation discovered that 56% of Americans

rate access to libraries from their homes as the most desirable service among those they could expect from the burgeoning "information highway"; many more than the 24% looking forward to 500 cable television channels or the 22% interested in shopping. There is a growing recognition of the importance of the things librarians do; including bridging the gap between new and traditional information technologies.



At the same time, in a troubled economy, costs centers cannot grow, and with rapidly increasing serial and monograph prices and the pressures of adding new technologies and meeting increased demand, libraries can be extraordinarily costly centers. Who but librarians can face the resultant new demands for efficiency and effectiveness?



Taming the Internet is an exciting challenge, but what happened to the mountain men and the gun slingers when the wild west was civilized? Will we find that when we create the virtual library, we will have no place in it?



David W. Lewis, *Head
Research/Information Services
University of Connecticut*



Librarians are a dependent profession; we do not produce library materials, we manage them, and consequently, must manage whatever forms of materials come our way. We've been telling folks for a while now that libraries are not only books, and that librarians can provide access to materials their library doesn't own. The challenges of non-book materials and ownership vs. access have been engaged. The new challenges of electronic publishing and access to virtual resources lurk just ahead. We will have to figure out what to do with not only such items as electronic journals available only over the wires, but hypertext novels that are so integrally bound up with electronics that they can have no print form.

We thus confront on the one hand a new set of skills, strategies and working conditions, and on the other the need to retain our traditional roles. If everyone is to become literate, if literate people are to be able to enjoy the fruits of literacy, if children are to grow up literate enough to take advantage of the world they live in, it will be because there are libraries to help them from the very beginning. Those libraries will need librarians, many doing different things than librarians do now, perhaps in different kinds of places; challenged, perhaps, but endangered – no.

*Howard Boksenbaum is Chief of Library Planning
and Development at the Department
of State Library Services*

Fay Zipkowitz — We may have several areas for concern with regard to numbers. In the past decade, several large graduate library programs have closed, reducing opportunities. We're an aging profession and many replacements will be needed due to retirements in the field. Depressed salaries have a negative effect on recruiting people into the profession. We must compete with other professions for the best and the brightest, and our salary levels make that very difficult.

What about the shrinkage of positions due to the poor economy and due to automation in the workplace? Certainly some cutbacks have caused the loss of professional positions, but the experience of automating libraries has not resulted in significant job reduction. Many positions have been altered by automation; even some functional specialties have been eliminated altogether or have been radically transformed. But whatever our library/information supply centers may look like in the future, they will not function without librarians, or, in fact, without printed materials.

What about the developers and the threat to our ecosystem that they represent? Information is now a commodity, to be bought, packaged, "value-added" and sold. We know a secret the developers don't want to know. We know that information is not controllable — it leaks. If I share information with you, I still have it; you share it and then others have it, but we still have it as well. That's messy for the commercial sector. They may be able to control data, but the exploitation of that data (turning it into information and finally transmuting it into knowledge and wisdom) is a process they can't control. We have the responsibility to be the conduits, the links to the public's right to know.

We differ from most endangered species in that we can affect, change, and influence our environment. We need to use our experience and knowledge to be critical users and fomenters of technological change, rather than grabbing onto every new fad.


We need to focus on the things we do best, and that *only* we do seriously and nonjudgmentally. No one else has the commitment to ensuring access to information, to preserving the historical record, and to continuing the mediation between the person and the record.

*Fay Zipkowitz is an Associate Professor
at the University of Rhode Island Graduate
School of Library and Information Science*


Anne B. Toll – Are librarians an endangered species? Is our environment threatened with elimination through radical change? Is our replacement rate too low to sustain survival? Is our habitat being degraded by development from external sources? Are we being forced to adapt to a changing environment in which we may not thrive? These are all very valid questions and should be

receiving serious consideration by all of us. They also raise more questions than we have answers at this point.



People who are computer literate are already bypassing libraries, using Internet and going directly to information sources. They do not feel the need for librarian mediated searches. As instant information is what they want, full text databases are preferred. Are we seeing an informational paradox where global information is available but self-limiting will result in most people writing similar papers and doing research based only on easily accessed electronic data? What will happen to the people who are not computer literate or cannot afford electronic access? What about all the other services we provide besides information? Will they still be provided? By whom? How will publishing change and how will this affect us?



A "Star Trek" future that allows one to simply ask the ever present computer for whatever information is required is an exciting one, which well-funded scientists and engineers are actively pursuing as we speak. But where is the reference librarian? There is none. In this future the last reference librarian sold her secrets to the expert systems people at Microsoft and retired to a beach where the sun always shines.



David W. Lewis, *Head
Research/Information Services
University of Connecticut*



Library schools have been closing all over during the last decade. Will we see an entirely new profession appear and take over our responsibilities? If so, will they share our concerns? Concerns about user education that will result in equal access for all; concerns about ongoing staff training to keep current as technology changes; concerns about preservation and archiving of information and the equipment needed to use it.

Bigger buildings and larger staffs may be a thing of the past. Access versus ownership is the new concern as a larger share of budgets gets diverted into electronic resources. Is our habitat being destroyed? Will we adapt to changing circumstances or settle for a lesser and more peripheral role? Are we aware of what our competition is doing and preparing for the future? Are we keeping up with changes as they happen or only when we can no longer avoid them?

The only constant among all these questions is – if we don't decide what our future should be and take control of the forces that direct it, we could not only be an endangered species but, like the dinosaurs, an extinct one. If so, will the profession that follows us be better or worse?

*Anne Toll is Director of the
Newport Public Library*

Leonard J. Panaggio – If librarians are on their way to extinction, then the human race can consider itself endangered.

What are librarians doing to stem this kind of thinking?

Have they organized nationally to study the problem – its causes, and eventual effects?

The background of the newspaper industry has a partial answer. Too many of them have ceased publication, and too many are merging. This is due to loss of circulation, despite the fact that there are 250,000,000 people in the United States. When the nation had 150,600,000 in 1950 there were the following newspapers in business in New York City: *Times, Herald-Tribune, Journal-American, News, Mirror, World Telegram & Sun, Post, the Brooklyn Daily Eagle and Newsday*. Today: *Times, Post, News, Newsday*.


Rhode Island's population increased 6%, during the decade preceding the tabulation of the 1990 census which gave the state 1,003,464 inhabitants. However, the state has a very high rate of people who cannot read.

Perhaps they are content to get their information and entertainment from television. Perhaps they are part of a growing immigrant population whose older members see no reason to learn how to read.


The computer age may be taking its toll as owners of these instruments can access themselves to information that they once found in libraries.

A few years ago it was announced that great books would be shown on screens in libraries. Perhaps libraries should think about becoming auditoriums of learning where books can be viewed and read in such a manner.



Librarians should work, lobby and do all they can to get the federal government to eliminate illiteracy. There is no doubt that those who can read, like to read, and there are those who say they utilize most of their free-time reading for pleasure.



Our biggest challenge is balancing the demand for traditional services with the demand for new technologies.



Marilyn Boria
*Elmhurst Public Library
Elmhurst, IL*



Despite the many amenities that one finds in libraries – the loaning of Polaroid cameras, videos, paintings, along with computers, microfilm readers and copying machines – despite a program of lectures and exhibits – librarians must apply themselves to the job of external promotion of their facilities, and the rewards gained from the use of libraries.


*Leonard J. Panaggio is a Columnist
for the Newport Daily News and a former member
of the Public Relations Committee of RILA*

Norman Desmarais – Librarians are not yet an endangered species but could become so in the not-too-distant future if we fail to adapt to the forces affecting librarianship. Librarianship is probably the only profession that defines itself by its work with a particular format — the book. If we restrict ourselves to the book business instead of the information business, we will find ourselves increasingly marginalized and closer to endangerment. While traditional print publishing doubles every twenty years, electronic publishing doubles every five years. And other non-book information formats continue to grow at a similarly rapid pace.


Secondly, recent years have seen the closing of several library schools. As practicing librarians get older and retire, will we have enough new graduates to fill the ranks? Many of the skills taught in library schools are now being taught in computer science courses. Will our replacements come from these programs rather than from library schools? Consider the number of computer-related ads that use the image or concept of the library or the number of programs that use a library analogy, such as the Personal Librarian or sound and image libraries.

In some institutions, computer services and libraries are being merged into an information resources department under a single administrator. Will this enhance the librarian's role and image or will it contribute to further marginalization? As the National Information Infrastructure and the virtual library become realities, the role of the library as a book repository will diminish. Patrons will access information resources from their homes and offices. The librarian's role will change with technological developments. We can expect to find ourselves increasingly in positions of administering and managing electronic resources and in teaching our patrons how to locate electronic information and navigate the information superhighways.

*Norman Desmarais is Acquisitions Librarian
at Providence College*



When we began making information available electronically on dial-up access, conventional use of the library increased - both the walk-in use and the borrowing of materials.



*Marilyn Mason, Director
Cleveland Public Library*



Elizabeth Futas – Although not a futurist, I often am asked about what libraries will look like in the next generation and what librarians will be doing. So far, this is the first time I have been asked about whether there will be any librarians in the next generation. I would like to be able to answer with an unqualified "Yes!" but I don't think I can. I believe that it depends on us. If we are flexible and have the vision that will be required of all information professionals, then we shall succeed beyond our wildest expectations; but if we do not grasp the technology, then we will be left behind as archivists of a dying institution trying to preserve a dying culture.

The definition of an endangered species is an interesting one, and it very much fits with the concept of an "old-fashioned" librarian. I think that where we might have gotten sidetracked is in thinking that it is an information and technology world that we are going to have to move ourselves into in the next century, and to a certain extent that is true. It is true in the same way that we have had to maintain a mastery over the manuscript, the printed book, the microform, the record, and the film in this past century. Where we sometimes go wrong is in thinking that it is these tools that should be our main concern. It isn't.

Now and always, our main task, our overarching concern, is with people. We use technologies (and yes, I think the printed book is a technology and once just as revolutionary as the computer is today) in order to help people retrieve materials for work and for play. In order to allow for retrieval, we have learned to acquire and organize this material as well. We are, first and foremost, a service occupation. If we let that remain in front of our eyes, and treat the extraneous equipment such as computers, video recorders, electronic networks, and the like, as just that, tools of the trade, we will retain the vision we need for the twenty-first century and beyond.

Our environment has not been degraded or destroyed by external sources; on the contrary, it has been extended, heightened, and made more important by advanced technology. What we need always to remember is that technology is one of a vast array of tools that allows us to do our job better and more efficiently. Our biggest concern as we face the next generation is protecting this technology for everyone. We are, after all, as the courts have said of the institutions that many of us work in, a public good. And we must treat the public well.

*Elizabeth Futas is a Professor at the University
of Rhode Island Graduate School
of Library and Information Science*

BULLETIN BOARD

Under consideration in the General Assembly are two joint resolutions providing additional funding to public libraries. The resolutions (94 H9342 and 94 H9343) were introduced by members of the House Finance Committee and call for additional \$500,000 allotment to public libraries on a per capita basis and an additional \$100,000 for Providence Public Library as the Statewide Reference Resource Center. The RILA Government Relations Committee, ably chaired by Maria Baxter, sponsored its annual Legislative Reception on April 28th, a well-planned, well-attended affair at which the importance of this funding to Rhode Island's public libraries was stressed.

The Westerly Public Library's Centennial Addition Project recently was selected for a 1994 Rhode Island State Historic Preservation Award by the Rhode Island Preservation Commission. The Commission cited the thoughtful stewardship of the Westerly Memorial and Library Association in overseeing an expansion carefully organized to complement the original structure built in 1894.

The Cranston Public Library Board of Trustees dedicated the Central Library Addition on April 17th. Featured speakers included Congressman Jack Reed, Mayor Michael Traficante, and Nancy Bordeleau, Chair of the Library Bond Referendum Committee. The addition and renovation project includes 6,200 square feet of new space for an additional 40,000 books, expanded audio-visual services, a public computer room, teenage room, seminar room for literacy tutors and students, an additional 24 seats at tables, an electronic index seating area, and a new gallery area. Work is almost complete on the project.

In honor of National Library Week, the Fuller Branch of the East Providence Public Library invited the community to celebrate the opening of the newly

renovated building and to introduce the large print collection. Wil Gates, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Mayor Rolland Grant and Beth Perry welcomed everyone to the library and offered their thanks to the library staff for good work and cooperative efforts. The Fuller Branch Library, located at 260 Dover Avenue, East Providence is open Monday and Wednesday 9-5, Tuesday and Thursday 12-8 and Saturday 10-5. Bulk loans of large print books can be made from this location. Call Paula Perkins at 434-3896 to make an appointment.

The North Kingstown Public Library unveiled its newly-renovated Meeting Room at a reception held on April 13th.

A two-day course (July 14-15), "Public Library Planning and Design," is being offered by the Harvard University Graduate School of Design. Intended for architects and librarians, the course examines concepts and methods for planning and designing the public library. Topics covered include space-programming standards for both small and large libraries, building design and technology, site planning, project budgets including furnishings and equipment, evaluation of existing buildings for adaptive use, and post occupancy evaluation techniques. Also featured are case studies of recent and proposed libraries and a tour of recently completed library projects in the Boston area, including the award-winning *Newton Free Library*, designed by Tappé/Kallman, McKinnell and Wood Inc., Architects, Boston. Tuition and materials fee is \$510. Call Graduate School of Design at 617-495-1680 for more information.

The American Library Association (ALA), in cooperation with the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES), has received a \$210,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) for a project titled "Beyond Category: The Musical Genius of Duke Ellington."

Rhode Island Library Association 1993-1994 Committee Chairs

Budget and Finance
Madeleine B. Telveyan
Rhode Island Historical Society

Conference
Karen E. McGrath
Cranston Public Library/Auburn

Federal Relations
Joan Prescott
Rogers Free Library

Government Relations
Maria Baxter
Woonsocket-Harris Public Library

Intellectual Freedom
Stephen L. Thompson
Brown University

Membership
Myra Blank
Rhode Island College/Adams Library

Nominating
Deborah R. Barchi
Coventry Public Library

Personnel
Deborah Lynden
Providence Public Library

Public Relations
Frances Farrell-Bergeron
West Warwick Public Library

Publications
Mattie E. Gustafson
Newport Public Library

Trustee Affairs
Flora Curry
Greenville Public Library

The project will include an exhibition as well as interpretive and educational materials that will examine the legacy of Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington (1899-1974), one of the most important and innovative figures in 20th-century American music.

The freestanding modular panel exhibition will tour 30 public and academic libraries in the U.S. between April 1995 and March 1997 (two copies of the exhibition will tour, allowing one to two months' display at each library). The project is based upon a major exhibition of the same name that was on display at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C., from April to September 1993, and is currently traveling to museums in 11 U.S. cities through 1996.

Site selections for the panel exhibition will be based upon a brief application form available from the ALA Public Program Office. Exhibition coordinators from the 30 libraries chosen for the tour will attend a training seminar in Los Angeles in February 1995. Coordinators will be able to view the Smithsonian's large-scale Ellington exhibition which will be on display at the California Afro-American Museum and will have an opportunity to speak to Hasse and project director Deborah Macanic.

"Beyond Category: The Musical Genius of Duke Ellington" is the second collaborative exhibition developed by the ALA and SITES. The first exhibition, "Seeds of Change," explored the global changes set in motion by the Columbus voyages 500 years ago. Based upon a major exhibition at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History, it toured to 59 public libraries in the United States, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands during 1992 and 1993.

To obtain an application form for the Duke Ellington traveling exhibition, contact ALA Public Programs, 800-545-2433, ext. 5056, or 312-280-5056.

PEOPLE

COLLEEN ANDERSON has been appointed Assistant Librarian for Reference Services at Bryant College.

SHEILA CARLSON has been promoted to Library Specialist III at the Department of State Library Services with a primary responsibility in library network development.

JUDANNE HAMIDZADA, a recent graduate of the URI Graduate School of Library and Information Studies, has been appointed Children's Librarian at Knight Memorial Library.

ELIZABETH HOLMES, formerly Technical Services Librarian at the Rhode Island State Library, has been appointed Cataloger at the Roger Williams University Law School Library.

FRANK IACONO, Supervisor of Reference Services at the Department of State Library Services, received the Distinguished Alumnus Award presented by the URI Graduate School of Library and Information Studies at its recent Annual Gathering.

LESLIE PAGE, Children's Librarian at Woonsocket-Harris Public Library, is one of four recipients of a 1994 Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) Putnam & Grosset Book Group Award. The awards are given to exemplary children's librarians who are ALSC members to attend an American Library Association Conference for the first time. Leslie will be officially honored at the ALA Annual Conference in Miami in June.

CONGRESSMAN JACK REED received an award from Friends of Libraries, USA (FOLUSA) for his work on behalf of libraries. The award was presented on National Library Legislative Day in Washington, DC, April 19th.

JACQUELINE "JACKIE" SMITH, Children's Librarian at Providence Public Library since 1971 and employee of the library for more than thirty years, has retired. After a truly distinguished career, Jackie plans to devote her retirement to family activities and travelling. On behalf of RILA, the *Bulletin* wishes her the best and thanks her for her years of dedicated service to children.

DONNA STEVENS has been appointed LARK (Library Activities and Reading Kits) Coordinator at Providence Public Library. She will be coordinating the grant-funded LARK project which will provide library service to Providence day care children.

PAM STODDARD, formerly of the URI Government's Publications Office, is now Children's Librarian at Providence Public Library.

At the URI Graduate School of Library and Information Studies, **JON TRYON** recently was promoted to Full Professor and **GALE EATON** was promoted to Associate Professor with tenure.

DATES

JUNE 9-10: RILA Spring Conference, Salve Regina University.

JUNE 23-30: ALA Annual Conference, Miami.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

JO-ANNE ASPRI
Librarian
Kent County Memorial
Hospital Library

JANICE ARGENTIERI
Trustee
East Providence Public Library

PAUL BACKLUND
Trustee
Warwick Public Library

BARBARA BOURGERY
Acquisitions Assistant
Johnson and Wales University

FRANCIS CAREY
Trustee
George Hail Library (Warren)

HENRY CAPARCO
Trustee
East Providence

ETHEL CHASE
Trustee
East Providence

FLORA LEIGH CURRY
Trustee
Greenville Public Library

JULIE DEARDOFF
Reference Librarian
Warwick Public Library

BETH DECRISTOFARO
Assistant Director
East Greenwich Free Library

PATRICIA DiBELLA
Student URI/GSLIS

LAURA DIXON
Student URI/GSLIS

BRUCE DYER
Trustee
George Hail Library (Warren)

JACQUELINE FORGUE
Trustee
George Hail Library (Warren)

LYNDA GAMBLE
Library Assistant
Langworthy Public Library

ANNA GEMPP
Trustee
George Hail Library (Warren)

DOUGLAS HINMAN
Catalog Librarian
Brown University

AMY KATS
Reference Services Coordinator
Johnson and Wales University

MELISSA KENTON
Sales Representative
EBSCO Subscriptions

JENNIFER LaFRANCE
Trustee
George Hail Library (Warren)

DORIANNE LAMBERT
Resources Librarian
Diocesan Resources Center

MEL-LYNN ANNIE LIN
Curator, East Asian Collection
Brown University

JOSEPH MCGOVERN, JR.
Supervisor of Media Services
DLS

CAROL MAZZULLA
Data Management Specialist
Submarine Data Center (Newport)

ARMANDO MEDEIROS
Trustee
East Providence

ADAM MISTURADO
Library Clerk
Rochambeau Branch, Providence

MICHAEL SHERIDAN
Trustee
George Hail Library (Warren)

ERIC SHOAF
Head, Preservation Department
Brown University

PAUL SILVA
Trustee
East Providence

HELEN SULLIVAN
Trustee
East Providence

INDU SURYANARAYAN
ILL Librarian
Johnson and Wales University

JOSEPH TARDIE
Sales Representative
EBSCO Subscriptions

JEANNE WARREN
Director
Pontiac Free Library

CARLA WEISS
Reference Librarian
Rhode Island College

THOMAS WRIGHT
Trustee
George Hail Library (Warren)

Editor's Journal

The library profession seems to be in the midst of an identity crisis. Who we are – what we do – why and how we do it – and most of all where we are going – thoughts on all these issues seem to be in an interesting and confusing state of flux. A quick review of the responses to our feature query, *Are librarians an endangered species?*, points out in no uncertain terms the extent to which answers vary and envisioned futures diverge.

Gene Roddenbury, creator of *Star Trek*, is generally credited with envisioning a future of positive images. In Roddenbury's world, progress has obviously been made in the years between the 20th and 23rd centuries, and man and womankind are seen, despite setbacks, and even some dark periods, as largely responsible for that progress.

But in spite of a universe full of high tech advances and advantages, the *technology* is never the goal. Technology is always the means by which *people* improve themselves and how they live. Technology run rampant – as an end in and of itself – is not good and the resolution to several classic *Trek* plots comes only when the technology is once again controlled and serving people.

The technology that has become a part of today's libraries is awesome. Paul Gilster in his book *The Internet Navigator* talks about that computer network as a "communicating amalgam of more than eleven thousand networks, ten million users, and a growth rate that makes attempts to quantify it in print necessarily obsolete." Vistas of knowledge, communication and *connections* have begun to open up that were undreamed of 10-15 years ago. But, as Liz Futas points out, libraries and librarians, in moving to embrace and employ electronic devices cannot overlook the fact that we are in the business of serving people.

How can librarians make the best use of the information technology now available to them, while enabling the public to adapt to, learn and appreciate this technology as well? Let me propose a model to think about.

In the context of today's library, is it possible to see the librarian as a systems engineer? The systems engineer's role is to sit between the end user (*aka* the patron), and the engineering developer/producer (*aka* Dynix, etc.) and translate user needs into engineering/production requirements. A successful systems engineer needs to be well acquainted with both basic engineering parameters, as well as user desires and limitations.

In this model the librarian, functioning as a systems engineer, becomes a proactive and involved partner in a team that involves both those who design and produce and those who use information technology. A translator, if you will, who interprets the needs, requirements and limitations of both parties to the other so that the end product(s) meet engineering criteria and function in a way that the user (in this case, *both* the librarians and the patrons) can understand and take maximum advantage of.

I don't know how something like this could be implemented. I don't know how the local public or school librarian becomes involved in product design parameters or specifications. And I do believe that in order to remain effective the local public or school librarian **MUST** remain in contact with the people they serve. Maybe working out the creative tension in this systems approach is part of what lies in the future.

The *RILA BULLETIN* is published six times per year by the Rhode Island Library Association. Managing Editor: Mattie Gustafson, Newport Public Library, Box 8, Newport, RI 02840 (847-8720), Feature Editors: Wendy Knickerbocker, Rhode Island College, Providence, RI 02908 (456-9605); and Judith Paster, 52 Seaview Avenue, Cranston, RI 02905 (467-8898); News Editor: Frank Iacono, DSLS, 300 Richmond Street, Providence, RI 02903-4222 (277-2726); Subscriptions Editor: John Fobert, Rhode Island College, Providence, RI 02908 (456-9614); Advertising Editor: Cynthia Archambault, Warwick Public Library, Warwick, RI 02886 (739-5440). A current list of RILA Executive Board Members and Committee Chairs is available in Volume 67, No. 1 & 2. Subscriptions: free to members; \$15/year in U.S.; \$20/year foreign. Deadlines: 1st of the month for features and 5th of the month for everything else. Advertising: \$130 full page; \$65 half page; \$40 quarter page; \$15 business card size. Change of address: members contact the Membership Committee Chair, Myra Blank, 11 Peepoad Road, Warwick, RI 02888, Rhode Island College/Adams Library (456-8190). Subscription correspondence: contact Subscriptions Editor. For further information, contact the appropriate Editor. Technical Production: Verbatim, Inc., 769B Hope Street, Providence, RI 02906 (273-6930). Printing by Lewis Graphics, 1655 Elmwood Avenue, Cranston, RI 02920 (941-4444). LC 57-26438.

Rhode Island Library Association
300 Richmond Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-4222

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
Providence, R.I.
PERMIT NO. 210

WAR

00387 M

RITA H. WARNOCK
271 DOYLE AVENUE
PROVIDENCE, RI

02906