

high. At the time of submitting this communication approximately 300 questionnaires had been returned.

If you have an active domestic approval plan, did not receive a questionnaire, and wish to participate in this nationwide research effort, please contact John Reidelbach, Chairperson, Collection Development, University Library, University of Nebraska at Omaha, Omaha, NE 68182, or phone (402) 554-2846. A copy of the questionnaire will be sent to you immediately. The questionnaire can be completed in approximately 30 minutes.

Position responsibilities in a given library may necessitate that more than one person provide the requested information. It would be most appreciated if the person initially receiving the questionnaire would pass it along to the appropriate person(s) for completion.

The authors wish to assure respondents that their comments will be held in the strictest confidence. Neither library nor librarian name will appear in the article to be published as a result of this study. Furthermore, none of the vendors will be provided access to the individual librarian responses.

Deadline for the return of questionnaires is October 31, 1983. Submission of the final manuscript to a professional journal is anticipated in June, 1984. ■■

Letter

Special Collections

To the Editor:

There are two points concerning libraries' reactions to difficult economic times which I do not believe have been considered by many institutions. The comparison between the number of users of Special Collections with the number of users of the general library is, as every Special Collections librarian knows, a false standard. It is, however, the one that is frequently used by administrative directors in apportioning budgets. An alternative and more realistic analysis, or comparison, should be based upon the number of persons affected, or potentially affected, by the uses of Special Collections.

In listening to discussions of comparisons of the number of users in each area, I thought of a friend who writes historical novels. He is noted for creating a sense of living during the time period of his fiction, and he therefore does extensive research in Special Collections departments. He would be counted as one researcher, or possibly the number of days would be considered, to arrive at "researcher-days." The impact of the services provided to him by the Special Collections department is, however, far greater than any such statistic would indicate. His books sell tens of thousands of

copies, and therefore, tens of thousands of people benefit from, and are affected by, his work in Special Collections departments.

We were able to demonstrate this effect several years ago in conjunction with an appraisal of a major archive. We surveyed the approximately 600 researchers who had used the collection since it had been available; approximately 400 responded to our survey. A large number were doing genealogical research, or other specific personal research, and there was no benefit beyond their own use. We did, however, demonstrate that a significant number of articles had been published based upon the collection. We were aware of several major books, but the number of other publications was a significant surprise. To simply state that during a five-year period, 600 people use this Collection is to understate dramatically the number of persons benefiting from it. The quality and importance of the uses of collections may be difficult to ascertain; however, few administrators would not understand that a use resulting in a published article cannot be equated with an individual checking general references in the general library.

The second point concerns fund raising. Friends of Libraries, and other knowledgeable groups involved with Special Collections, may frequently make large cash contributions which are not for specific purchases or projects. When other groups are approached, particularly the business community, it is important to relate the contribution to a specific expenditure or need. My involvement with libraries raising funds has repeatedly shown this to be true. Potential donors can relate to acquiring a specific collection (with a detailed explanation as to why the library wants it and how scholarship will benefit from its being available) or giving funds to process a collection after they have been shown the collection and had its importance explained.

Those who understand the activities of Special Collections will continue to make general cash contributions, but those who really do not understand the importance of Special Collections, but are potential donors, need to be told why the money is needed, what you will do with it, and what benefits people will receive from it. You will be offering to these potential donors, who do not already have the appreciation of the field, the opportunity to do something worthwhile with their money that they are able to relate to. This approach I have found has had quite significant results.—*Kenneth Rendell, The Rendells, Inc., Newton, Massachusetts.* ■■

