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# Promoting innovative management and services

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## *Two academic libraries win John Cotton Dana Special Awards for Library Public Relations.*

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*Editor's note: The author is a member of the John Cotton Dana Library Public Relations Award Contest Judging Committee.*

**T**wo academic libraries that used innovative promotional techniques to publicize their activities have won Special Awards in the 1988 John Cotton Dana Library Public Relations Award contest. The McGoogan Library of Medicine, the University of Nebraska and the University of Texas at Arlington Libraries are winners in the prestigious contest that recognizes creativity and excellence in library administration and management. The competition, held annually since 1946, is jointly sponsored by the H.W. Wilson Company and ALA and honors the career of John Cotton Dana, who recognized the advantages to library programs that well planned publicity provides.

The contest grants awards in two categories. A John Cotton Dana Award recognizes a library public relations program that is ongoing, sustained and well rounded. Such a program is directed toward a broad range of existing and potential groups and effectively promotes a complete range of services. A Special Award recognizes a discrete aspect of library public relations within the context of a larger program or a public relations program that supports a specific project, goal or activity. Special

Awards are given for projects that are limited in time, scope, nature or audience.

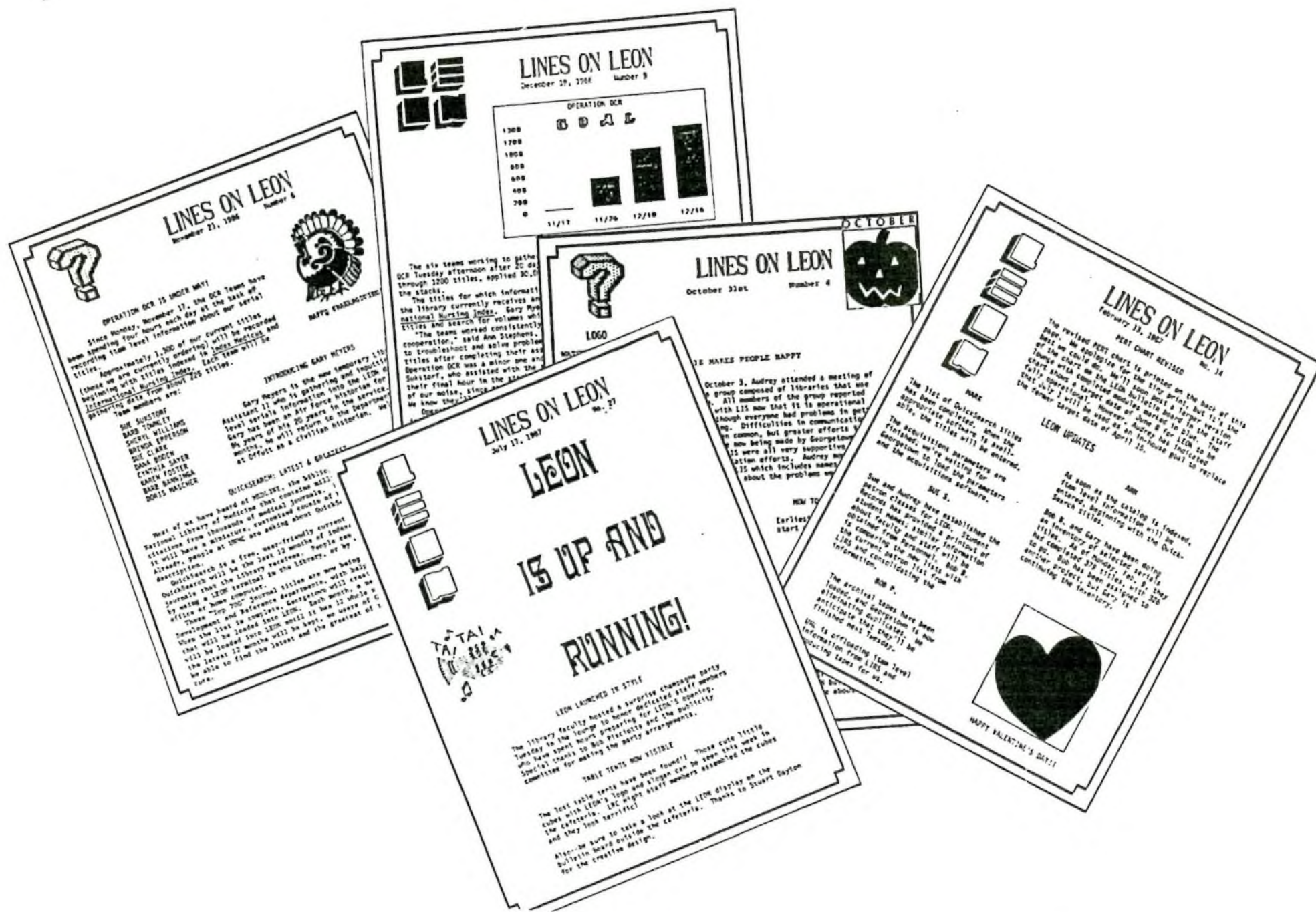
Academic libraries are entering the contest in increasing numbers. This year twelve of the more than 120 entries came from this category. Indeed, of the eight types of libraries recognized, only public libraries provided more entries.

### **“LEON” introduced**

The McGoogan Library of Medicine won a Special Award for their creative planning and launching of a program to elicit maximum acceptance of LEON, an automated library system, among its diverse constituencies and from the McGoogan Library staff. The library serves a variety of information needs within the University of Nebraska Medical Center formed of some seven educational units, three research institutes and a 412-bed tertiary care hospital. LEON was introduced in July 1987 by a nearly fifty person library staff that itself had been prepared by a small group called the LEON Publicity Task Force. The task force had set several objectives. They wanted to inform and involve library staff in system implementation, personalize the introduction of LEON to campus opinion leaders and increase LEON's visibility and the awareness of its introduction and use among all campus user groups.

# LINES ON LEON

## A WEEKLY IN-HOUSE NEWSLETTER



*The University of Nebraska's McGoogan Library of Medicine used its weekly staff newsletter to announce the LEON automated system.*

Meeting the first objective was one of the chief strengths of the McGoogan entry. The internal public relations program included a weekly staff newsletter that fostered interdepartmental communications by involving staff at all levels and in every department. Bulletin boards displayed graphics and charts which visually described the progress of system benchmarks. Staff meetings were held to explain the incoming system and to answer questions. A "bug box" received reports of quirks in the system and explanations were published in the internal newsletter. Finally, as the implementation date approached, a surprise party helped "launch LEON" and express the task force's appreciation of the hard work contributed by all staff. This intense internal public relations effort helped ensure that a library staff, happy and proud of their new service, would be ready for the next step, the personalized introduction of LEON to the McGoogan Library's constituents.

To introduce LEON to the people it was intended to help, the task force created a "Speaker's Bureau" made up of library faculty. The Speaker's Bureau was provided with a presentation outline, handouts, a list of anticipated questions and answers, and a videotape about LEON. They then arranged to meet with faculty during regular department meetings and at a site of their choosing. Less

of an effort was made to "educate" the faculty than to inform them of the virtues of the new system in a casual, entertaining and even amusing way. The videotape produced by the staff features a ringing endorsement of the system by a very familiar figure and supporter of the medical center—and whose name the library bears. This is followed by a relaxed and entertaining demonstration of the system highlighting exaggerated problems.

This personalizing of the introduction to reach faculty was not the only effort the task force made. Staff and students were informed through news articles printed in three campus publications and a lecture/demonstration open to all medical center personnel. Finally, a brochure and bookmarks were designed for general distribution, table "tents" were placed on cafeteria tables, and helium balloons marked LEON terminal locations within the library. Suzanne Kehm, who headed the project credited early work with staff as the key element in the plan.<sup>1</sup> When the outreach effort began a highly motivated staff was on hand to support it.

Quantitative results sometimes escape even the best public relations plans, but other evidence sug-

<sup>1</sup>The others are Carolyn Reid, Leslee Shell, Dorothy Willis, and Stuart Dayton.

gests the time Ms. Kehm and her colleagues spent developing the program produced results. For example, the chair of the Academic Computing Advisory Committee praised the LEON public relations program as a model of a successful marketing campaign in that everyone on campus knows what LEON is and does. The medical center Chancellor has made the library an important stop for visiting dignitaries. Evidence of satisfaction by those being served and by those whose support is needed in budgeting matters evidences a successful public relations effort.

### **"Friends in Texas"**

One does not necessarily associate institutions or organizations in Texas with a lack of promotional efforts. Now there is one less. For their successful effort in organizing the Friends of the University of Texas at Arlington, the library administration and staff won a Special Award in 1988.

UTA is located in a city of 250,000 people. During the past several years Arlington has been one of the fastest growing cities in the state, partly as a result of its close proximity to Dallas and Ft. Worth. Because of its location, however, Arlington has not developed an active cultural community. Instead, residents primarily frequent and support the cultural institutions in Dallas and Ft. Worth. UTA library administration believed that the lack of a cultural outlet in Arlington provided an excellent opportunity for the formation of a local organization devoted to books, letters and the support of the UTA Libraries. Accordingly, plans were made to organize the Friends of the UTA Libraries. The library administration believed that the Friends would attract members from the fast growing local community as well as University students and staff. Of equal importance, a Friends program would nicely compliment the UTA Development Office's effort to answer the same cultural needs through the University Lecture Series begun in 1986. The contacts made through the Lecture Series provided an important human resource on which to draw for the Friends Advisory Council.

The goal of the program set, objectives were established: to appoint an Advisory Council, to draft and approve a constitution for the Friends, to elect officers, to design and carry out an effective membership campaign, to enroll 100 members during the first year, to sponsor two attractive programs within six months, and to raise \$5,000 in membership dues during the first year.

Though the Friends were intended as a support group for the University Libraries as a whole, much of the early activity was focused on the Special Collections Division, which is known for the quality of its holdings. From the outset, programming was designed to convey the "image" and reputation for high quality which would mirror the quality prospective Friends would bring to UTA. An Advisory Council for the Friends was organized

and was composed of community leaders and Library and University officials. The program included creating a mailing list, writing and designing a promotional brochure, conducting an extensive mailing campaign to target populations, creating and sponsoring Friends programs, developing high visibility through press releases in the Arlington-Dallas-Ft. Worth area and within the University and the State University system, maintaining contact with members and potential members through Christmas cards, newsletters and special publications; and developing an attractive yet realistic benefits program.

In their application, the architects of the UTA effort emphasized the quality aspects of the plan. "The most innovative aspect of the program was the attempt to establish a tone of high quality in each aspect of a highly complex development plan through attention to tasteful detail in such things as announcements, invitations, publications, entertainment, and menus at events, but also with the intellectual content of the programs and the Friends publication program." For example, the Friends plan to publish a facsimile strike from the rare Jaillor Copperplate owned by Special Collections and have entered into an agreement that will result in a "Friends of the University of Texas at Arlington Publications Series."

In the pursuit of a quality program with scholarly content, the Friends of the UTA Libraries, by the time they submitted their entry, had achieved their goals and objectives. The group drafted and approved a constitution; officers were elected; 205 people had joined; two programs featuring best selling author Liz Carpenter and John H. Jenkins, noted Texas book dealer and author, had been sponsored, membership dues totaled \$6,625, and outright cash gifts reached \$3,375. Finally, significant gifts of fine collections valued at \$120,000 were received. It is clear that the Friends public relations program had focused new interest and attention on the UTA Libraries as a provider of cultural activities as well as that of an emerging research Library.

### **More ideas**

The number and quality of entries from academic libraries has steadily increased in recent years. Indeed, several other academic libraries reached the final round of judging. One used the "Year of the Reader 1987" to launch a multifaceted program to highlight library services to the campus community and associate the library with fun, educational and cultural events. Another used a videotape to lampoon library shibboleths and create a humorous environment for bibliographic instruction. Still another used a video "brochure" to apply ideas of marketing to the promotion of library services. Another used a birthday party to call attention to its role in the college.

These entries and others will be highlighted in the ALA publication, *Great Library Promotion*

*Ideas*, 5th ed., to be issued later this year. The winning entries will be on display at the John Cotton Dana booth at the New Orleans ALA conference.

### Things to consider

This year winners share a common theme. Their programs are not wholly unique in the sense that it was the first time a library had ever brought up an automated system or begun a Friends group. But both entries showed evidence of planning realistic goals, then setting about accomplishing them in in-

novative ways. Jon Eldredge, a frequent observer of JCD entrants from academic libraries, delineated the key ingredients of a winner in a 1986 article (*C&RL News*, October 1986, p. 579). Entry packets for next year's contest are available from the Marketing Department at the H. W. Wilson Company, 950 University Avenue, Bronx, NY 10452. Academic libraries have much to gain by promoting their services, then promoting their efforts by applying for a John Cotton Dana Award or Special Award. ■■

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## How others see us

by Diane Richards

*Reference Librarian  
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### *Examining the image of the academic librarian.*

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In common with other professionals, librarians have long been concerned with their image. Our profession has been plagued with an unpleasant, and increasingly irrelevant, librarian stereotype. In an effort to make some headway with this problem, the Washington State Chapter of the Association of College and Research Libraries convened its Spring Meeting in Ellensburg, Washington, on April 22, 1988, for a program entitled, "How Others See Us: The Professional Image of the Librarian."

The topic of this meeting was particularly timely for academic librarians employed in the State of Washington. After several years of minimal pay increases for faculty at state schools, a bill granting substantial raises was introduced in the first session of the 1987-88 Biennial Legislature. Initially, this bill specifically excluded librarians, even though librarians are considered faculty at all the state institutions except the University of Washington, where they are classed as "academic" employees.

In prior years, librarians were grouped with faculty at all the institutions when raises were considered. This time it was different. Because of their more nebulous status and a perception that their university administration was not supportive, the University of Washington librarians decided that some direct action was necessary. Hiring a lobbyist to present their case to the legislature seemed most appropriate. The outcome was to include permissive language in the bill that allowed each institution to decide for itself whether to include librarians as faculty. Ultimately, all the state schools gave their librarians the same access to raises as other faculty.

However, the entire process and its attendant publicity brought to the forefront the question of how librarians are viewed by those outside the profession, particularly when money—and morale—hang in the balance.

Against this backdrop the 1988 Spring Meeting took place. The timeliness of the topic; the conve-