
Letters

Coping with a quake

To the Editor:

The article "Coping with a quake" (*C&RL News*, November 1990, 928-33), though generally very instructive, makes one suggestion that is seriously misleading and should be corrected.

On page 932, the authors imply that patrons should have been reminded to take belongings with them when evacuating the building. In some dozen years of disaster planning, every emergency professional I have dealt with has emphasized that when a situation calls for evacuation, getting out of the building should be the *only* focus. In case of fire or earthquake especially, there is simply no way to tell

whether seconds will be critical, and the assumption should always be that they are. (And the few seconds required for each patron quickly add up.)

In the case reported, the problem was compounded when staff were allowed to reenter the building to retrieve patrons' personal belongings. If, as the authors report, the situation was still "potentially dangerous," *no one* should have been permitted to go back in until responsible authorities, acting on expert advice, had determined that the building was safe. The inconvenience was no doubt annoying to the patrons involved, but when that is weighed against the potential for serious injury or death there is no question which should prevail.—*John Lancaster, Curator of Special Collections, Amherst College Library* ■■

ACRL statement addresses academic library partnership with federal government

A statement on the federal government's role in the growth and development of library resources has been released by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL).

Entitled "Academic Libraries: A Source of National Strength", the statement recommends actions that will enable academic libraries to reassert their leadership position in the national effort to increase productivity, expand literacy and strengthen democracy.

"This statement addresses issues of importance to academic libraries—the National Research and Education (NREN), dissemination of federal in-

formation, preservation—and will orient White House Conference delegates and participants in preconference activities to the challenges facing academic libraries," said Patricia A. Wand (American University), chair, ACRL Task Force on White House Conference on Library and Information Services. The task force developed the statement.

A limited number of statement copies are available from Academic Libraries: A Source of National Strength, ACRL/American Library Association, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611.

The statement also appears on the September issue of *College & Research Libraries News*. ■■

Academic librarians urged to adopt ALA Code of Ethics

ACRL and the ALA Professional Ethics Committee have joined efforts in urging academic librarians to adopt ALA's Code of Ethics.

A joint letter from ACRL president Barbara J. Ford and ALA Professional Ethics Committee chair Anne Marie Allison will be published in *College and Research Libraries News*.

The Code of Ethics states librarians must: "provide the highest level of service through appropriate and usefully organized collections,

fair and equitable circulation and service policies, and skillful, accurate, unbiased, and courteous responses to all requests for assistance; resist all

efforts by groups or individuals to censor library materials; protect each user's right to privacy with respect to information sought or received, and materials consulted, borrowed or acquired; adhere to the principle of due process and equality of opportunity in peer relationships and personnel actions; distinguish clearly in their actions and statements between their personal philosophies and attitudes and those of an institution or professional body; and avoid situations in which personal interest might be served or financial benefits gained at the expense of library users, colleagues or the employing institution." ■■