Letters

To the Editor:

Anthony Ralston's "The Library Lobby" perhaps should not be taken seriously, since it represents not a scholarly approach to an academic problem but a political approach. However, it does appear as the lead article in a scholarly journal, and therefore, should be criticized in the hope that it will not be taken seriously.

It is clear that Ralston does not understand the purpose of libraries, and one doubts that he understands the purposes of computers. The technology of computers, yes; the purpose, no. The purpose of the library in the university should be academic. So should the purpose of the computer. He says that the computer is a general intellectual resource for the entire university community and "all users make use of approximately the same set of resources." True, perhaps, but the actual data useful to a large segment of academia is almost nil.

Ralston says that "lack of adequate computing facilities or fast service can be a severe, sometimes fatal impediment to effective research activity," and "it is relatively unusual for the lack of specific items in the university library to make a research activity unfeasible." Try that last one on the next professor requesting an interlibrary loan! Such statements reveal an ignorance of research and its techniques. Perhaps, as Professor Billington of Princeton has said, "the advent of the computer has encouraged the trivialization of scholarship and the belief that things that count are those that can be counted."*

Ralston suggests the library charge students for providing information and that each department have a budget for library usage to which each transaction be charged. So now we are to provide service only to those students and departments that can provide a budget for it. It is quite true that some departments use the library more than others, and that library services need to be evaluated, but we need more interdisciplinary cooperation, not a further fragmentation of the university based on ability to pay.

Ralston's views are not new. They represent the narrow view that technologists have always held and which have contributed so much to the belief that if something is technologically feasible it should be done, and should be supported, without concern for the implications to society. The computer is a marvelous tool and has many applications in both data processing, and some day, information retrieval. It needs the firm hand of the humanist to guide it if it is to make a significant contribution to goals of the university.

G. M. Jenks
Ellen Clarke Bertrand Library
Bucknell University
Lewisburg, Pennsylvania

To the Editor:

Elizabeth Stone's article, "Quest for Expertise: A Librarian's Responsibility" (*CRL*, Nov. 1971), discusses ideas and makes suggestions which have wider application than just to academic librarians. All librarians, academic, special, public, school, etc., have an obligation to develop professionally. What concerns me is the narrowness of ways and subjects in which Stone suggests librarians can grow professionally.

I agree workshops are an excellent way in which to keep up with the new developments in the field of library science. Library schools should do much more in sponsoring one- or two-day meetings designed to keep professional librarians up to date. I question the advisability of taking more than two or

* Quoted in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 6:5 (12 Oct. 1971).

three more courses in library school after one has their MLS degree unless studying for a doctorate. Formal courses in library science per se can only go so far and after a while cannot really help one to grow professionally.

Also, I seriously question Stone's contention that librarians should be expected to engage in research and publication as a matter of course and that growth will automatically follow. A great deal of research and scholarly writing done today is repetitious, dull, and of little significance. It may enhance the writers' reputation and if employed in teaching it is necessary to advancing one's career. Whether it *really* contributes to the profession and learning in general is another question. Not all people are equipped to do research or have the incentive to do it. Testing the results of research is always a questionable task since conditions usually have to be right and situations do not always call for the application of research results.

Stone suggests that librarians become involved in the community outside the library as librarians. I would suggest librarians become involved in the community in any way they wish as individuals whose profession happens to be that of a librarian. What is necessary, I think, for the librarian is first and foremost for the librarian to develop as a person; to have other interests than the library. One may have strong interests outside the library and the library profession and still be a dedicated, up-to-date librarian; if one is aware of the world in which they live they can serve the public better than if they try to apply everything they come across to librarianship.

In this day of specialization and social upheaval it may be rather old-fashioned to suggest librarians return to the concept that a librarian should be a "Renaissance Man," but that is what I think we should aim for. Stone emphasizes the social and behavioral sciences to the exclusion of the sciences and humanities. The librarian interested in the sciences or humanities has as much to contribute to the profession as those interested in the social sciences.

Librarians deal with people in social situations, true, but they deal with individuals more. A humane and particular interest in each person's needs is more important than dealing with the library public as a social group.

Lois E. Newman
Librarian
RAND Corporation Library
Santa Monica, California

To the Editor:

Thank you for Mrs. Stone's article. I will now start reading, widely, outside library professional literature—take courses and receive formal instruction—attend every workshop I can—calm my fears, undo my ignorance—join Common Cause, and Sierra Club, the Republicans even—never miss a PTA meeting—and see how I progress. Do we report back a year from now?

For those who cannot bring themselves to any of these, be consoled. Motivation is in the genes and if Stone's findings are correct, librarians are wanting in this part of their genetic makeup. Genetic engineering is indicated; exhortations are useless.

T. Mark Hodges
Associate Librarian
Southeastern Regional Medical Library Program
Emory University
Atlanta, Georgia

P. S. Anthony Ralston's article was a real humdinger.

To the Editor:

I am a little surprised to see Mason's adjectival orgy taken so seriously (*CRL*, Sept. 1971). I expected Clyde King's evaluation of the Gas Bubble to conclude "but of zero scholarly value."

I find it difficult to believe that anyone ever believed all that Licklider told us in "Libraries of the Future," or that senior members of the profession should fail to recognize that the computer is to the printing press what the internal combustion engine is to our own two feet. Did you ever know anyone who sold his car after costing it against his own two feet?

Amongst the problems facing the costing of automation projects is the problem of costing our services and finding the time to do it. If Mason cared to visit the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, he could see

an order system which, when I left the post in the spring of 1970, had not been evaluated beyond "we couldn't go back to the old system." Amongst the benefits I would not know how to cost are monthly lists informing staff of the progress of orders placed in response to their requests, regular reminders in place of the annual dismemberment of the order file, relief from filing, a printout allowing much speedier consultation than a card file.

The early literature stressed that computers were looked to to solve problems of increasing loads which manual systems were unable to bear, especially circulation systems. This hardly tallies with the vision of manual perfection that emanates from Hofstra. If Mason has no problems he can well afford to watch from the wings until fully developed packages are available for him to take over—development costs nil.

John H. Russell
Sublibrarian
Salford University
Salford, England

To the Editor:

Re Carver's letter *re* Corbin *re* Mason:

Carver, I think, does Mason some justice, and some too to Corbin. But, my goodness, the last paragraph of the letter—well, all one can say is: "For heaven's sake, block that flyaway metaphor."

Peter Gellatly
Serials Librarian
University of Washington Libraries
Seattle

To the Editor:

As a university librarian, and now a student of information problems, I could not agree more with Anthony Ralston (*CRL* 32:427–31, Nov. 1971). In the last few years, my entire orientation on the question of building library collections has been—in library committee meetings, at professional library meetings, and in my writings—toward making more efficient use of the books we have and by making more efficient allocation of the book budget. I have taken this stance even if it were to mean a reduction in the library's budget, or a reduction of the percentage of the university's budget allocated to the library.

Finding ways to "consider the utility of a particular book or periodical when ordering it," as Ralston puts it, is one of our profession's great unsolved problems. How do we predict demand for a book at time of purchase? And how many copies do we buy to satisfy that demand? The second question has been partially answered, but not the first. To wait until the book has or has not circulated over a period of time before determining demand merely contributes to the usual frustration in libraries. If Ralston can suggest a solution to this problem—or even suggest a research method—he would be making a contribution to our profession even greater than he has with his article. Not until we have this solution can we effectively reduce our budgets, or pacify the faculty at large who are after all the ones whose demand for large libraries accounts for library budgets which everyone except men like Ralston say aren't large enough.

William E. McGrath
Syracuse University School of Library Science
Syracuse, New York

To the Editor:

I was astonished to find, in the annotation on p.40–41 of the January 1972 issue of *CRL* ("Selected Reference Books of 1970–71") that *Gazety SSSR, 1917–1960* is the "definitive bibliography of Soviet *periodical* literature," lists "*journals* by subject," and omits archival locations for "*journals.*" This is a crucial error in a usually reliable listing such as Mr. Sheehy's, since the highly important bibliography under review lists only *newspapers*, as is clearly indicated by the unambiguous title. As the volume's preface states, this is the first attempt to compile a complete listing of post-Revolutionary newspapers printed in the USSR. And, as any Slavic librarian should know, the definitive *periodical* bibliography for the 1917–1960 period (covering journals, monographs in series, and miscellaneous recurrent publications) has been in print for some years. *Periodicheskaia pechat' SSSR, 1917–1949* (M., 1955–63) was followed by *Letopis' periodicheskikh izdanii SSSR, 1950–1954* and *Letopis' periodicheskikh*

izdanii SSSR, 1955–1960. A forthcoming supplement will list interim journals published from January 1917 to the establishment of Soviet power in 1923, thus completing a series of *periodical* bibliographies spanning the period from 1703–1960.

I should also like to take exception to Ms. Evelyn Lauer's criticism of the lack of library locations for the so-called "journals." Such a union listing would be redundant, since all the newspapers listed are available either from the Lenin Library (Moscow) or the Saltykov-Shchedrin Library (Leningrad), and the major all-Union newspapers (such as *Pravda, Izvestiia, Ekonomicheskaia Gazeta, Krasnaia Zvezda*, etc.) are also held by the city libraries of the Republic capitals.

I hope this note will clarify the scope and intent of *Gazety SSSR, 1917–1960* for librarians who otherwise might have been regrettably misled, and who might not have added this exceedingly valuable pioneer work to their collections.

Rosemary Neiswender
Slavic Bibliographer
University of California
Los Angeles

To the Editor:

Mrs. McCaghy and Mr. Purcell have made a good case study of "Faculty Use of Government Publications" at Case Western Reserve University (*CRL* 33:7–12, Jan. 1972) and I agree with them on suggestions made to increase user's awareness of the documents collection. Indeed, no matter what organizational scheme the library may adopt for maintaining government publications (U.S. federal), it would very much depend upon librarian's efforts and expertise to promote a fuller use of them to support academic and research programs of the institution and, in this sense, a closer and constant communication between faculty members and librarians should be more encouraged and desirable in the area of government publications.

The degree of using government publications by faculty members (and students) may also depend upon *what type* of academic and research programs the institution carries on. The paper does not include this factor in conducting the survey and the outcome of it could have been somewhat different.

Following are some of the academic and research programs at State University of New York at Stony Brook which generate a *heavier use* of government publications both by faculty members and students in the group, among others, of statistical/technical publications, and U.S. congressional committee hearings:

For Undergraduate Academic Programs:

1. Interdisciplinary Program in Black Studies
2. Interdisciplinary Program in Environmental Studies
3. Interdisciplinary Program in Urban Science and Engineering

For Graduate Academic and Research Programs:

1. Earth and Space Sciences
2. Ecology and Evolution
3. Marine Environmental Studies
4. Urban Science and Engineering
5. Applied Ecology Project

As you may know, the majority of publications to support the above programs are government-authored at all levels.

Jai Liong Yun
Documents Librarian
State University of New York
at Stony Brook