

## Letters

To the Editor:

Your "What Is Research?" editorial (May 1988) is like a summary of a conversation which has been going on for years among a small group of librarians. As we have talked about the role of research in libraries and library schools, several generalizations have emerged.

In many disciplines, research conducted in the academy by faculty and graduate students finds its application in industry or business. The library schools have not developed a mature research capability comparable to that found in medicine, engineering, or some social sciences. The nature of graduate student research, as currently practiced in library school programs, also differs from the pattern found in the sciences and social sciences. Typically, library/information science Ph.D. candidates conduct unfunded research and are free to select problems from a fairly wide range of possibilities. In the sciences and social sciences, Ph.D. students are very often funded by the research programs of senior faculty. The dissertation topic is necessarily one germane to the grant which is paying the student's salary. All of the necessary laboratory equipment, statistical and other computer programs, and advisors available to the senior faculty member on the project are also available to the graduate student. While there is less freedom of choice, there is some assurance that the study complements and extends other research. We really have no parallel in library and information studies.

On the matter of a research agenda, if we are to take that question seriously, we must be clear about what constitutes significant and relevant questions. We must also become quite hard-nosed about what we accept as appropriate methodology for data collection and analysis. To quote you to yourself, "Critical thinking in a broad sense, meaningfulness and utility" must be the principal criteria in establishing that agenda. The sentimental attachment to socially desirable actions cannot substitute for a search for the intellectual basis of the discipline.

Hope you don't mind such a long-winded way of saying thank you for an editorial I enjoyed and appreciated.

L. YVONNE WULFF

Assistant Director for Collection Management, University of Michigan,  
Ann Arbor

To the Editor:

The brief editorial on Library Superstars in the July issue of *College & Research Libraries* prompts this little note.

From a quick perusal of the list of nominees in this July issue, one can deduce at least two criteria for excellence in the library world: (1) reside in the Midwest; and (2) be blessed with an exotic name like "Deborah."

About half of your list of nominees are located in midwestern libraries (Indiana, Ohio, Minnesota, Missouri, Kentucky, et al). Three of the fourteen Superstar nominees have the name Deborah. (Incidentally, only two on the list are male!)

Seriously, names and locations are not important, but at the top of my list would be personality and competence. So much for trivia; only retired librarians have the time to write such letters to the editor!

H. VAIL DEALE

Director of Libraries Emeritus, Beloit College, Beloit, Wisconsin

To the Editor:

As Director of the Molesworth Institute I was intrigued by a reference in Ms. Gregory's excellent article on "State Coordination of Higher Education and Academic Libraries (*C&RL*, July 1988). Perhaps you can persuade her to produce at least a research note on the concept of "director borrowing" as noted in table 6 (p.321) of her article. Since she reports that such a program was judged to be either successful or moderately successful by 68 percent of the respondents and very unsuccessful by only 1 percent of the respondents, information about the benefits to be gained, by either the borrowing or the lending library, by the loan of library directors should prove of great interest to us all. Cynical speculation here has centered on the possibility that the absence of the director, even if only for a two-week loan, might allow staff to concentrate on getting their work done without the usual administrative interference. Information about overdue fines and recall policies would also be appreciated. Such a note would be sure to entitle Ms. Gregory to election as a fellow of the Molesworth Institute.

NORMAN D. STEVENS

Director, The Molesworth Institute, Storrs, Connecticut

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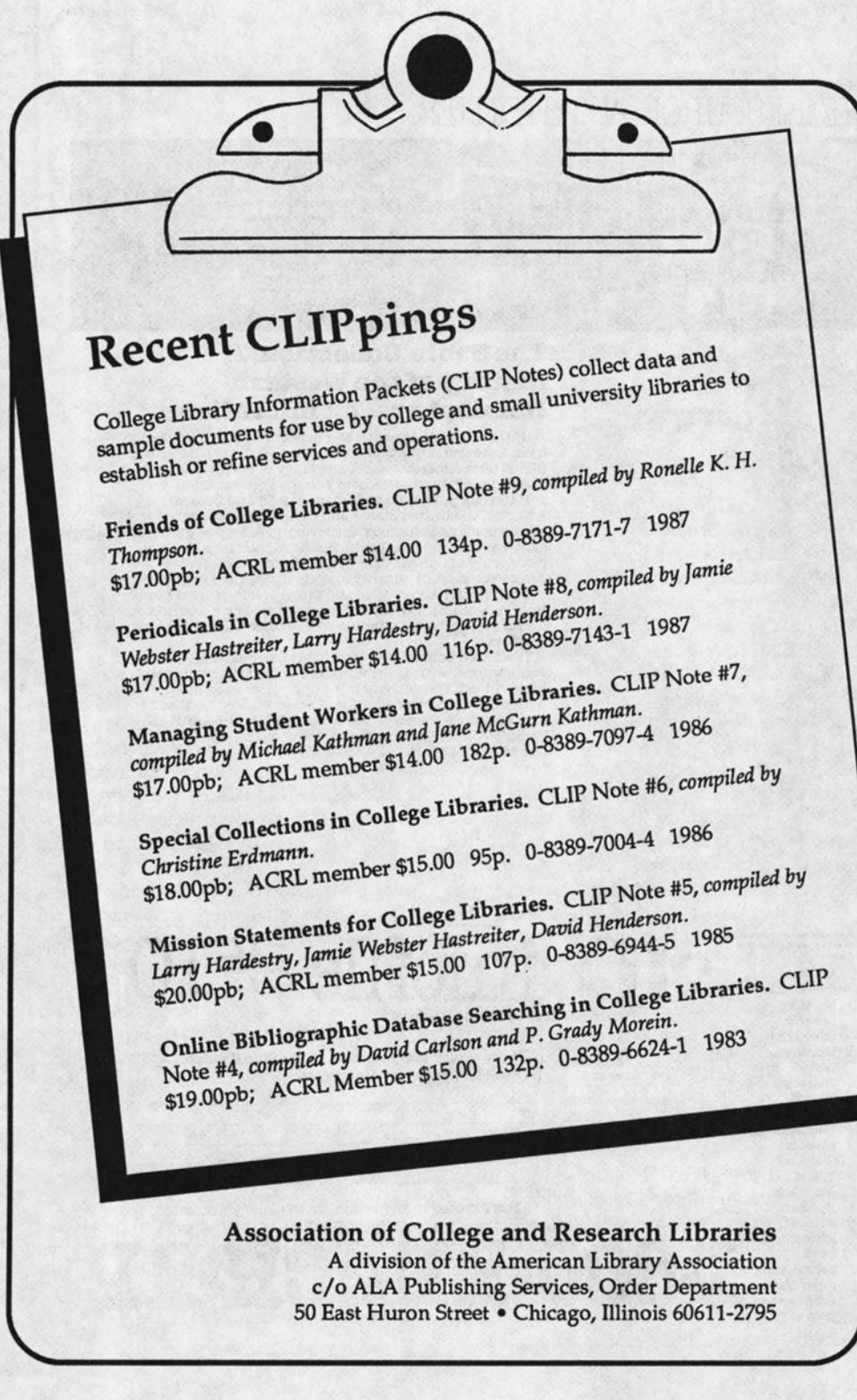
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