

Letters

Preservation Efforts

To the Editor:

Gay Walker's article, "Preservation Efforts in Larger U.S. Academic Libraries" (*C&RL*, January 1975), offers some excellent suggestions for coping with the problems caused by deteriorating library materials. Two additional suggestions, I feel, warrant consideration.

First, any preservation program should emphasize preventive conservation. There are many activities designed to eliminate conditions harmful to a collection which are well within the budget and personnel capabilities of most libraries. Examples of such activities are the periodic treatment of leather bound volumes with appropriate dressings and use of protective light filters for fluorescent tubes.

Secondly, few libraries can afford to establish an in-house restoration laboratory. One alternative for providing access to professional restoration expertise is to cooperate with other libraries and related organizations in establishing and staffing a regional conservation center. The New England Document Conservation Center is evidence of the feasibility for this course of action. Governed by librarians under the New England Interstate Library Compact, the center provides "at cost" conservation assistance and restoration services for nonprofit library, archival, educational, historical, and cultural institutions in New England. Now at the end of its second year of operation, NEDCC has become self-supporting and has proved to be an excellent means for meeting the restoration needs of libraries throughout the six-state region.

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Reference Service

To the Editor:

The article by Robert Balay and Christine Andrew, "Use of the Reference Service in a Large Academic Library" (*C&RL*, January 1975), represents a valuable contribution in studies of reference service. One would that more reference librarians undertake serious research to assess the effectiveness of their services.

One noteworthy flaw in their study seems to be that Figure 4 and the data from Tables 3 and 6 fail to support the concluding remark that "evening use of reference service was significant." Only 14.2 percent of all reference inquiries came after 7:00 p.m. Yet the hours of 7:00-10:00 p.m. represent 22.4 percent of the total time during which the reference desk is staffed during a normal week (8:30 a.m.-10:00 p.m. Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Saturday, 7:00-10:00 p.m. Sunday).

When properly drawn, Balay and Andrew's Figure 4 would look something like the redrawn figure which is provided. In the redrawn figure, the same proportions are retained, but all intervals on the time axis have been made equal. This reduces the three precipitous peaks to credible size. Some averaging was necessary in redrawing the figure, since exact numbers of inquiries were not available for certain hours of service in the day. The redrawn figure suggests that the students in 1971 may indeed have had a good case when they "challenged the reduction in hours of [library] service and suggested that library funds could be saved by eliminating evening reference service . . ." (p.26).

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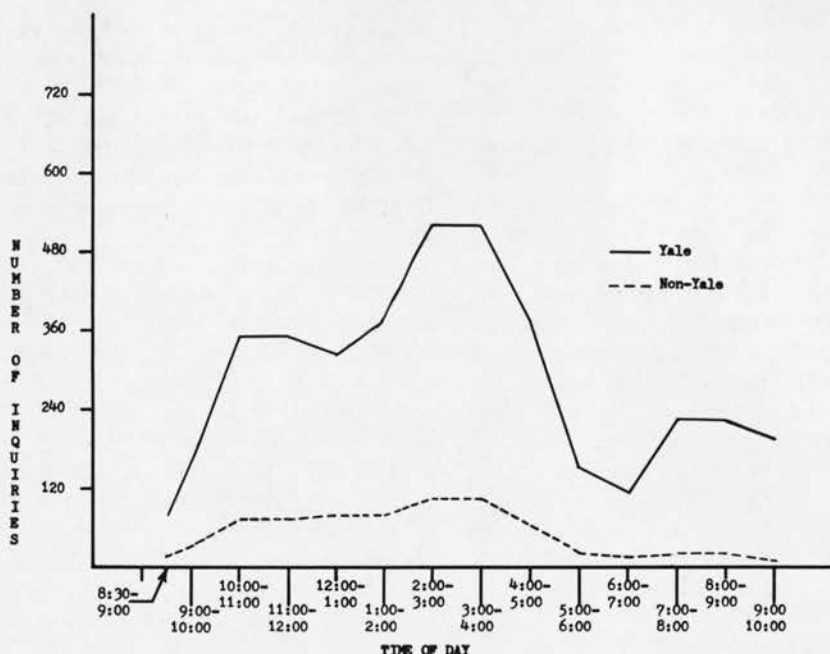


Fig. 1

Yale Versus Non-Yale Users, by Time of Day. Adapted from Table 6 and Figure 4 of Robert Balay and Christine Andrew, "Use of the Reference Service in a Large Academic Library," *College & Research Libraries* 36:9-26 (Jan. 1975).

Response

Mr. Bennion's comments are constructive. His reconstructed figure does give a slightly more accurate picture of hour-by-hour use than did our original. Our figure was based on data as gathered, with no averaging; time periods for data collecting were based on reference desk staffing patterns and were not reduced to hourly segments.

As to Mr. Bennion's contention that our data will not support the conclusion that evening use of reference service was significant, the matter is more complicated than his calculations would indicate. Since the reference desks both at present and during the period of the study are double or triple-staffed during periods of heavy use, the total number of hours of reference service offered on a typical day is 22.5; between 7:00 and 10:00 p.m., the desk is staffed by only one librarian, a total of three hours. The staffing provided during those hours is 13 percent of the total daily staffing, a figure that compares well with the inquiry

level of 14.2 percent for the same period. It is also worth noting that 16.3 percent of the users affiliated with Yale appeared during the hours of 7:00-10:00 p.m.; since these users constitute the primary user group, continuing reference staffing during these hours was, we believe, supported by the data. In any event, this judgment was based on the numerical data produced by our study, not on the pictorial representation of it given in our graph in Figure 4.

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 and
 Christine Andrew
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Libraries and Librarianship

To the Editor:

Permit me a bit of factual correction of W. David Laird's remarks about my *Libraries and Librarianship in the West*.

It is not "one of those paperback books

doctored" to look like a hardbound. As will not surprise anyone familiar with the writing of serious works, my 447 closely packed pages of text (about which he says very very little) result from several agonizing reductions.

The paperback idea is, of course, appealing, and I wish the numerous students already using the book had it available thus. Unless the near future brings a better book written by Mr. Laird or someone else—according to him the feat ought to be easy—a paperback version may indeed appear.

What Mr. Laird read as "Main Index" is "Name Index."

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Response

To the Editor:

I'll stick by my "doctored paperback" de-

scription. Dr. Jackson's book is a paperback. It is constructed of loose sheets glued, rather than quires sewn, to a back-strip. Also, although the covers are stiff, they are not covered with cloth; they are covered with a thin plastic-coated paper. As a compromise, I suggest "high quality paperback."

Nowhere in my review did I claim it would be easy to write Dr. Jackson's book, but even a bad book can be made respectable if it is handled appropriately with regard to index, bibliography, and arrangement, and if it is read and "red-penciled" by a competent editor. The fact that we transcribed from electronic equipment "main" for "name" seems hardly important in light of the fact that the book has two alphabetical sequences of index and nine alphabetical sequences of bibliography along with many, many textual errors.

W. David Laird
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