

NETnews

St. Louis Regional Library Network

June 1990 Volume 2 Number 8

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New Director for Pius XII

by Daniel North

Dr. Frances Benham will become the new Director of Pius XII Memorial Library at St. Louis University on July 1. She succeeds William Cole, director from 1971 until his retirement in June 1989.

Born in Texas, Dr. Benham received her Ph.D. in library science from Florida State University in Tallahassee. She comes to Pius from the University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa, where she was Associate Dean for Collections and Information Services since 1987. In addition, she served as library director at Pittsburg State University in Kansas (1983-1987), after holding academic library positions in Texas, Florida, and Mississippi.

Dr. Benham is coauthor of the book, Success in Answering Reference Questions, published by Scarecrow Press in 1988, and has also published several articles and has written and received a number of grants. Since 1986, she has been Chair of the Evaluation of Reference and Adult Services Committee of ALA's Reference and Adult Services Division, and is also active in other national and statewide library organizations.

Mercantile Library Appoints Director

Jeffrey E. Smith, 33, of Akron, Ohio, has been named the thirteenth Executive Director of the St. Louis Mercantile Library Association. The Board of Direction selected Smith from a large field of candidates, citing Smith's experience in management, planning, development, and programming.

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**COUNCIL
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JOBLINE

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Library Clerk

Library Assistant I position, with primary responsibility at circulation desk. Full-time position (37 1/2 hrs/wk). Responsibilities include:

circulation desk work, assisting patrons in use of online catalog, aiding patrons with directional and ready reference questions, and working on special projects as needed (processing new materials; reserve list maintenance; book repair; etc.) Qualifications: Library experience preferred; good communication skills; service-oriented; attention to detail; ability to work evening and weekend hours; flexible. Ability to work well with people is important.

Library Clerk

Library Assistant I position, with primary responsibility in Children's Room. Full-time position (37 1/2 hrs/wk). Responsibilities include: circulation desk work, assisting with programs for children, helping patrons use online catalog, assisting patrons in choosing books. Qualifications: Library experience preferred; ability to work evening and weekend hours; good communication skills; service-oriented; attention to detail; flexible. Creativity helpful; ability to work well with children important. Knowledge of children's literature a definite plus.

Send letter of application to: Marylou Fox; Webster Groves Public Library; 301 E. Lockwood; Webster Groves, MO 63119.

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AGE OF INFORMATION

by Mary Jo Godwin

(For the many librarians unable to attend the Annual Dinner, we share the words of wisdom of our guest speaker.)

It is a pleasure to be with you tonight to celebrate National Library Week and the culmination of the St. Louis Library Network's year of activities. Tonight is really a special occasion. It is the eve of the largest ever national promotional campaign for libraries-- The Night of a Thousand Stars. From Maine to Florida to Southern California and the state of Washington, celebrities, government officials, families, people young and old will participate in local activities--reading from their favorite books, telling stories, sharing words all to promote libraries, reading and literacy. The Night of a Thousand Stars is truly a grand idea, actually it is a brilliant thought and most laudable is the fact that it didn't take a high priced Madison Avenue PR firm to come up with the idea. A librarian, Retta Patrick, the current president of the American Association of School Librarians, thought it would be wonderful to have a hands across America type of activity for libraries. She acted on her thought and...well, you know the rest of the story.

And all of us have similarly meaning thoughts about the importance of libraries and reading in this age of information, but how often do we act on them. During the eighties we heard and read plenty about the need for more aggressiveness in the profession. "Pit bull librarianship--" I like to call it. Everywhere you looked our image was suffering--"The Librarian as Lap Dog" was the cry. The Special Library Association initiated an image taskforce to examine the problem. Why even the Wilson Library Bulletin jumped on the bandwagon and devoted a whole issue to the discussion. But that was the past--the eighties. Now we're moving into a totally new decade and from what I see on the horizon, there are plenty of opportunities for all types of librarians to step into the limelight and be a star.

Please, don't misunderstand my skills and ability to look into the future-- I'm not a forecaster or futurist--just a library magazine editor looking for trends and ideas about libraries and librarianship that need to be addressed in order to promote a better understanding of the role of libraries and librarians in our society. I've been keeping a file since early last year of some articles, speeches, and comments that seemed to convey what the next decade would be like.

Let's take a moment to look at some of these observations on life in the Age of Information:

--In Wurman's book, Information Anxiety, he states that "A weekday edition of the New York Times contains more information than the average person was likely to come across in a lifetime in the 17th century England.

--between 6 and 7 thousand scientific articles are written every day in this country.

--90% of the information and knowledge required in the year 2000 has yet to be invented.

--According to forecaster Marvin Cetron, when the class of the year 2000 graduates, the body of knowledge will have doubled four times since 1988.

--John Naisbitt has written that the amount of information and knowledge in the world doubles every 2 1/2 yrs.

Are these figures totally depressing you? I hope not! They are rather mindboggling-- If libraries are going to manage or rather survive in this climate, then each of us has to have a vision of what our libraries will be in the year 2000. We must begin now to define our role and plan the work we have to do to reach that vision.

My vision of the future is one where librarians are leaders. Harlan Cleveland stated it well at a 1988 ALA Midwinter President's Program. He said, librarians and communications leaders are the gatekeepers that funnel information to the people. As public servants, librarians preside over the common heritage of society. The future of librarianship depends on whether or not librarians recover from the culture shock before the people do. The big question we have to answer is how can we accomplish this?

(1) To recover or rather cope in the information age we are going to have to think more globally. By seeing the issues in a global perspective we will come to understand that we share a common destiny. Robert Connor, Director of the National Humanities Center said recently that we are beginning to understand that America's place in the world is shaped not simply by our military and economic strength, but by our ability to relate effectively to people of different traditions. He believes that through the humanities we can achieve a better understanding of foreign cultures. Whether it is through the humanities or the sciences-- the environment seems to be an issue around which diverse cultures are relating, we need to learn to deal effectively with change.

We have to (2) put a higher priority on improving the quality of public school education. America's institutions of higher education are the school's of choice for students from around the world who can afford to study abroad. However our public schools lag far behind those of other industrial nations. Harvard University President Derek Bok speaking to the members of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences noted that studies show successful schools are marked by four things: (a) freedom from external control leaving more power in the hands of the individual school to plan its own educational program for itself; (b) strong leadership--not authoritarian--but strong leadership in uniting the faculty and students by articulating a clear academic mission for the school; (c) a lot of teacher participation in deciding how to teach, what materials to use, and what curriculum to follow; (d) and most significant was a lot of parental involvement in the life and progress of the school. (-- No where was the need of multibillion dollar bailout of the schools by the federal government indicated.)

To cope with the changes of the future we have to embrace and foster the importance of lifelong learning. Tomorrow's employees will require continuing education far beyond computer literacy in order to stay productive and keep pace with technologies that become obsolete in five to seven years-- computer technology in less time. Our new communications technologies do away with the constraints of time and distance and create a need for people to understand who they are, why they are here, and other fundamental questions of right and wrong. The coming decades will be an "Age of Aging". Currently people over the age of 85 are the fastest growing segment of our population. Did you know that the number of centenarians will double in the next ten years and quadruple by 2030. Older workers will mean an emphasis on retraining.

Now that I've set the stage a bit, let's look at what this means for librarianship and who the stars of the profession will be. Regardless of your current library position--take a minute to think about what you will be doing ten years from now in the year 2000. Create the scenario in your mind. Day dream awhile--let your thoughts go--drift along into the future--be wild--be crazy----PAUSE

Now think for a minute was there any risk taking in your future, was it optimistic, did it involve an element of intellectual curiosity? If so, then you have demonstrated some of the classic characteristics of a leader. Other traits that have been noted in leaders are results orientation, vision, excellent communication skills, reliability, consistency, and positive self-regard. But don't worry if none of these characteristics apply to your future. Because equally as important as leadership will be the concept of followership. Peggy Johnson in an article in the Journal of the Library Administration and Management Association pointed out that leaders delegate and followers accept, sometimes with passionate enthusiasm. Followers are also loyal to leaders whom they trust. Together the leaders and followers will work toward a shared vision of the library each with the understanding of his or her individual role in the organization.

Whether your future scenario casts you as a leader or a follower, as a librarian, you are working in and helping to create an environment in which people can grow personally, feel fulfilled, and share in the psychological and emotional rewards of a job well done.

My favorite scholar and mythologist Joseph Campbell illustrated the powerful role business plays in our society with the following image. "In medieval times when you went into a village you saw the turrets of the castle and the spires of the cathedral, and it was from those two institutions that all the values came. Today, we see the gleaming towers of commerce. People build their lives around the towers, communities take shape, skills are learned, social relationships are formed, attitudes and aspirations are molded, a dense matrix of values grows up in and around the towers of commerce and spreads into society at large."

I believe that in the future, the towers of business will be replaced by the towers of libraries and resource centers filled with the words and images, sights and sounds of all the diverse cultures from recorded history. All communities and commerce will have access to the libraries, work skills will be taught, social relationships will be formed, attitudes and aspirations will be molded, ideas will flourish and a dense matrix of values will form and spread throughout the world.

We will have many opportunities during the next decade to work toward making this dream a reality. Events such as the White House Conference on Libraries and Information Services, scheduled for July 1991 and the attending state and local meetings and forums will bring together librarians, trustees, Friends, business and government leaders, library users, and others to focus on the informational needs of the citizenry and the needs of our nation's libraries.

There will be ample opportunity for us to lobby elected officials and inform them of our libraries needs, services, and goals. We have got to get the word out. We can write articles for publication, (and not only in library journals) we can conduct research, be program speakers, talk about libraries to our friends, neighbors, families, anyone who will listen. You've got to let your expertise as librarians shine.

We must stay informed not only with the library literature but in the other areas as well. Business, management, government, and technology, particularly telecommunications. In the future we will probably spend as much effort selecting the library's telecommunication system as we now spend on the building's design. Participation in professional organizations is a must. Sharing ideas with colleagues, learning about new products, and not to be overlooked--just getting away from the daily library routine--can provide insight and a clearer perspective on goals and objectives.

If we are going to keep the library stars shining into the next century, we have to actively recruit excellent candidates for library education, support scholarships and endowment funds, and guide the career development of new librarians. Essential too, is the awareness that you are a symbol of the library. Wherever you go in the community, school, or corporation, you represent the library. Being positive, friendly, helpful, and informed can help get the message across that the libraries are where knowledge and understanding come together-- and it is the librarian-- who builds the bridge, closes the gap, and lights the way.

That's the official ending of my remarks tonight. Now it is time to think about the future and have a little fun.

(continued in next issue of NETnews)

(continued from page 1)

Smith is currently director of the Summit County Historical Society in Akron, a post which he has held since 1981. A trustee of the Ohio Museums Association and an advisory board member of the University of Akron Press, Smith is widely published in the fields of business history, women's studies, and material culture. He will receive a Ph.D. in American history from the University of Akron in 1990.

"We believe that Jeff Smith will further develop the Library's strength as an independent research library. He understands the fundamental educational role which historical organizations and libraries can play in our community and the nation," Staurt Symington, Jr., President of the Mercantile Library's Board of Direction, said.

The St. Louis Mercantile Library Association, founded in 1846, is the oldest continuously active cultural organization in St. Louis. The Library is also the oldest circulating library in continuous existence west of the Mississippi River.

Today, the Library serves a broad community of users, ranging from individual readers and researchers to scholars studying historical or other humanistic subjects. The Library is renowned for the depth of its collection in western Americana, railroad and inland waterways transportation, and its extensive rare book collections in all aspects of the humanities.

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Dear Friends,

On June 17 I am leaving St. Louis Public Library and relocating in Harrisburg, Pa. Many thanks to all of you that I have had the pleasure to work with during my seven years in St. Louis. I know that the Network will continue to be a valuable link for people and resources in the area. Please keep in touch and give me a call if you're ever in South Central Pennsylvania!

Cathy Alloway
Director, East Shore Library

NETnews is published nine/ten times a year by the St. Louis Regional Library Network to report on Network activities, meetings, and items of interest to the membership and wider library community.

News, reviews and comments are welcome. Send information to Bernyce Christiansen, 9425 Big Bend Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63119. You may call Bernyce at the SLRLN office, (314) 965-1305.

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