



Editor's Keyboard

Gregg Sapp

Vive la Différence!

One of the things that I aspire to accomplish during my two-year term as editor of *LA&M* is to broaden its base of contributors and, in doing so, its reach, perspective, and ultimately, its

impact. Let me clue you into a dirty little secret that we editors know about the literature of librarianship. It is dominated by the ideas, opinions, and research interests generated by a minority of librarians—that is, tenure-seekers (or an even greater minority, those with tenure still motivated to write) at academic institutions where librarians have faculty status. At this point your response might be a shrug of the shoulders and a quiet, “Well, duh, Gregg. Tell us something that we don’t already know.” Hear me out, though.

Don’t misunderstand me. As a recently tenured faculty librarian myself, I know very well that when it came to passing muster with the tenure review board, my publications are what really buttered my bread. There’s nothing necessarily kind about the dictum to “publish or perish,” but it is a reality that we accept. If your sole motivation for contributing to library literature, though, is just to skate through the tenure process, then your objectives, however understandable, are not perhaps as noble as they should be. Further, since probably no more than half of even *academic* librarians are on a tenure track, the degree to which their disproportionately voluminous contributions represent a relatively narrow range of interests results in the comparative impoverishment of the greater diversity of viewpoints and experiences from which we can draw collective wisdom.

I believe that if you are a dedicated professional librarian, you invariably have an article or two within you that yearns to be written. If you are doing a good job, you’d almost *have* to. Lacking the compulsion of tenure deadlines and obligations, though, too many of your articles go unwritten. Let this be your wake-up call to rally behind your word processors! If nothing else, blog or write letters to the editor!

When you do, I hope that you will think first of *LA&M* as a venue for publication. I modestly think that this journal fills a very unique need. Another thing that we editors understand but don’t much like to publicize is

that the litmus test of quality in our own literature isn’t necessarily peer reviewing. Peer review is a process, not an outcome. We have enough peer-reviewed journals (not to name any names) already cranking out material that I, personally, find to be of questionable relevance even if it *is* peer reviewed. This is librarianship, not biomedicine or nuclear physics. *LA&M* is about dialogue, exchange, problem-solving, and stimulating thought . . . and the measure of quality is much less whether a group of “peers” gave an article a thumbs up, or that its results were quantifiably or experimentally replicable, but that the members of LAMA read it, thought about it, and put it to use. With some of those august peer-reviewed journals, I sometimes suspect that the authors care, primarily, about getting published, and only secondarily whether anybody reads their stuff.

Consider this and the previous issue (my first as editor) of *LA&M*. Contributors to volume 21, number 1, included public librarians, a high school librarian, and a library school student. This issue includes material from special librarians, an author who was recruited from the South East Florida Library and Information Network leadership development program, and another person who is taking advantage of being in between jobs to do some writing. In the pipeline for future issues are contributions from international librarians—from Europe, the Middle East, and the Far East. Certainly, material from academic librarians will continue to be encouraged and welcomed, but I hope that future issues will reflect the wealth of diversity that LAMA encompasses.

Why is this so vital? I think that you can infer the reasons from the content of this issue. In different ways, the feature articles and case studies all illustrate one important point: library users, and indeed even librarians themselves, are changing in many fundamental ways. In his philosophically inclined essay (he even quotes Aristotle!), John Bednarz Jr. explores the need for systematic planning with built-in flexibility. Susan Markgren et al. look at the new generation of librarians, which represents a group of skilled professionals who, in their words, suffer from a “five-year itch” that library leaders must allow them to scratch or we’ll lose them. The two case studies in this

continued on next page

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products. The Dow Jones was 436. It was the year that the bucket was born at Kentucky Fried Chicken. (It included fourteen pieces of chicken, five rolls, and a pint of gravy. The cost: \$3.50.)

When looked at from today's perspective, the price of things in 1957 is a real jolt to the system. A car would set you back \$2,100, with gasoline running twenty-three to thirty-one cents per gallon. The average home cost \$18,000. The price of a postage stamp was three cents. A loaf of bread could be purchased for nineteen cents, and milk was \$1 a gallon. A dozen eggs could be had for eighty cents. The minimum wage was \$1, and the average annual salary was \$5,500. Campbell's tomato soup cost ten cents a can, and bananas were twenty-seven cents for two pounds. A man could get an all-wool suit for \$28.90 and jeans for only \$2.49. When you think about the value of a dollar and how much the cost of items has escalated between then and now, it's a real bargain that LAMA's annual membership dues are only \$50 today.

The times they are a-changin' but look how much stays the same. We still see the TV shows on reruns or late at night. The music, movies, and books never die. Some of the same teams are still winning today. Through everything, LAMA has been consistent in delivering services and programs at an affordable price to its membership.

As we begin the next fifty years together, I am pleased to announce that Frances Hesselbein will be the President's Program speaker in Washington, D.C. Hesselbein chairs the board of the Leader to Leader Institute (formerly the Peter F. Drucker Foundation for Nonprofit Management). She serves on many nonprofit and private sector boards, including those of the Center for Social Initiative at the Harvard Business School and the Hauser Center for Nonprofit Management at the Kennedy School. She is chair of the national board of directors of Volunteers of America.

She was the chief executive officer of the Girl Scouts of the USA from 1976 to 1990. She was awarded the highest civilian honor in the United States, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, in 1998.

Hesselbein is the editor-in-chief of the quarterly journal *Leader to Leader*. She is the coeditor of the book of the same name, as well as of the best-selling *Leader of the Future*, which has been translated into sixteen languages. She also is the coeditor of *Leading Beyond the Walls* and *Leading for Innovation*, two books in the Drucker Foundation Wisdom to Action series. Her book *Hesselbein on Leadership* was published in 2002. Hesselbein's most recent book, *Leader of the Future 2: Visions, Strategies, and Practices for the New Era*, follows her previous work *Leader of the Future*. That title is one of the most widely distributed works on leadership. The newer book, published by Jossey-Bass in fall 2006, has twenty-seven insightful essays by some of the most recognized, thoughtful leaders of today.

Hesselbein has presented to leaders of national and international organizations from the public, private, and corporate sectors, including National Urban League, the World Bank, American Management Association, Eastman Kodak, Chevron Texaco, and Hewlett Packard. She has been featured on the covers of *Business Week* and *Savvy* as an example of managerial excellence, as well as in issues of *Fortune* and *Chief Executive* on leadership. Hesselbein appears in the management video, "The Leader Within," with Warren Bennis.

I hope you will mark your calendars for Sunday, June 24, and join me for an exciting program with this preeminent speaker. It will be an opportunity you do not want to miss.

As I look back over the last fifty years, one thing is apparent. No matter how the world changes, you can count on LAMA for the next fifty years.

issue provide a glimpse into what can be learned from focus groups. Allmang and Ouimette review their data to reveal some surprises about a user group they thought they knew well, and Stanley holds a mirror up to the profession, to make us see ourselves the way students see us. Each of their perspectives adds something unique to the changing big picture of contemporary librarianship.

So, if you are thinking about writing that article that resides in the back of your mind, take the advice of Don Riggs, as quoted by Rich Ackerman in this issue's installment of the ChangeMasters series: "When an opportunity arises, take it!" Here's an opportunity, readers.