



Social Responsibilities Round Table Newsletter ALA

NEWSLETTER #46

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ACCESS: NOW ALA POLICY

OCT 5 1977
LIBRARY

- WHEREAS, information is essential for all persons at all age levels and all economic and social levels, and
- WHEREAS, publicly supported libraries are "institutions of education for democratic living" [Library Bill of Rights], and exist to provide information to all persons, and
- WHEREAS, increased use of automated bibliographic data bases (many of which have been developed with tax funds) has caused some publicly supported libraries to charge for those services, which practice may set precedent for further fee setting, and
- WHEREAS, the charging of fees for information deprives service to those who cannot afford the fees, and thus effectively discriminates against them, and
- WHEREAS, ALA has urged the free flow of information and has spoken clearly against all obstacles that stand in the way of an individual's access to ideas and information,
- THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that ALA affirm its belief in the concept of access to information, without charge to individuals, in public and other publicly supported libraries, and be it further

continued...

...from page 1

RESOLVED, that the ALA approve the following statement of policy:

It shall be the policy of the American Library Association to assert that the charging of fees and levies for information services, including those services utilizing the latest information technology, is discriminatory in publicly supported institutions providing library and information services.

It shall be the policy of the American Library Association to seek to make it possible for library and information service agencies which receive their major support from public funds to provide service to all people without additional fees and to utilize the latest technological developments to insure the best possible access to information; and that

The Association will, through an active program of information, education, and the formulation of future policy and programming, actively promote its position on equal access to information.



FREE ACCESS RESOLUTION
BECOMES ALA POLICY

by Jim Dwyer

On Wednesday, June 22, ALA affirmed its support of the principle of free access to info for all. Both Membership and Council overwhelmingly endorsed Membership Document #7 after defeat of a similar motion by Council at Midwinter.

Free access was clearly one of the major issues considered at the Detroit conference; ALIA, MARS, and SRRT all held programs on the subject while both outgoing ALA President Clara Jones in her presidential program and incoming President Eric Moon in his inaugural, "Data bank is two four-letter words," spoke out strongly in favor of free access. Norman Isaacs, a distinguished journalist and editor, was Ms. Jones' guest speaker and he reminded the audience that, "You are toiling in the public interest and the flow of information must remain free."

The SRRT program featured four highly varied and stimulating speakers. Fay Blake of UC Pomona led off with a suggestion that we fight harder for realistic budgets and a shift in government priorities. She urged librarians to engage themselves in economic planning leading to greater taxation of corporate profits, with increased tax revenues being used to develop the public sector.

Economist Rick Hill of Michigan State Univ. traced the origins of the fiscal crisis currently hampering libraries to the financial oligarchy of private enterprise and the recessionary policies of the Nixon/Ford years. The solution, he said, was not to turn libraries into "public corporations" but for libraries to provide services based on need, thus serving as a model for other public institutions.

Hill was followed by Bernadine Hoduski of the Joint Committee on Printing, who revealed the growing trend among government agencies to demand fees for services despite the questionable legality of double and triple taxation. She emphasized the necessity of closely analyzing cooperative and networking arrangements that might lead to user fees and the importance of establishing closer relationships between librarians and government officials and representatives.

Data bases which were once suited to specialists are becoming more comprehensive and can be expected to be of greater importance to the general public over time according to Anne Lipow of UC Berkeley. She stressed that rather than selling our services to patrons we should be aggressively promoting their public utility when library funding is appropriated.

Now it's up to us as to implement the Resolution on Free Access in our own back yards. By itself an ALA resolution is little more than a sheet of paper, but with our efforts it can be used as a basis for local library policies and practices, a catalyst for action. The time has come for librarians to take a more activist stance in promoting the concept that our services are to be paid for collectively and distributed widely at no cost to the patron.

ALSO PASSED ...

● ALA membership did approve a few noteworthy resolutions at the Wednesday, June 22 meeting. Besides the free access resolution, a resolution on ethnic groups and the White House Conference was carried. This directs our Executive Director to transmit to the state library agencies our concerns for consideration of ethnic groups.

● Also passed was a resolution commending BOOKLIST for its efforts on behalf of feminist press materials.

● One of the major resolutions slid through with little debate while many parties were still licking their wounds from the Speaker episode. This being the resolution on the Equal Rights Amendment and conference sites.

With its passage, ALA is now committed to granting future conferences only to states that have ratified the ERA. ALA is committed to future conference sites through 1982, so it will have little immediate affect.

NOTE OF WARNING: Illinois has not yet passed the ERA and you can bet your OCLC terminal that a move will be afoot to reverse this resolution to enable future Chicago conferences.

● A strong gay rights resolution was passed on June 22 by Council. Prepared by the Gay TF and sponsored by Councilor Dorothy Broderick, the resolution expands a gay rights policy adopted by ALA in 1971 and declares that "Council reaffirms its support for equal employment opportunity for gay librarians and library workers" and also that "to combat the current campaign against full human rights for gay American citizens, Council recommends that libraries reaffirm their obligation under the Library Bill of Rights to disseminate information representing all points of view on this controversial topic."

TASK FORCES

ETHNIC MATERIALS INFORMATION EXCHANGE TASK FORCE:

Over 300 people came to Cobo Arena Sunday, June 19th to hear an inspiring presentation on the importance of the survival of ethnic identities through cooperation, resulting in true ethnic pluralism as the American ideal. The program was sponsored by SRRT's Ethnic Materials Information Exchange Task Force (EMIE TF). The theme was seconded by most of the panel speakers, e.g. Geraldo Rivera said that "Our destinies are so interlinked, we really are all smaller families in the context of the large family."

All agreed on the necessity of preserving what Yuri Suhl called "that beautiful and richly embroidered possession called heritage." Anna Arnold Hedgeman stressed the importance of each person building on the pain and suffering of his or her group history as a means of building a new kind of world.

David Cohen, moderator, cited Alex Haley's ROOTS as the signal for librarians and librarians to become more alert and active in building ethnic collections and in programming library services for the diverse ethnic groups in the community.

At their business meeting, EMIE TF discussed cooperation with Dr. Dorothy Haith from Amabama AAM in presenting a workshop or institute about how to recruit minorities to fill jobs and qualify as students in professional programs.

Genevieve Correa expressed a need for more info on Asian Americans, especially Portuguese Americans. She also suggested the possibility of a program on the Hawaiian experience for SRRT.

Also discussed was EMIE TF's place in the ALA structure along with the position of the Library Services to the Disadvantaged Minority Concerns Subcommittee. The possibility of these groups joining together to become a Round Table is being investigated. Joan Neumann is developing a statement giving the pros and cons of establishing a RT.

Some RT advantages would be: 1.) there would be officers who would be responsible for maintenance tasks, 2.) a newsletter could be created for info exchange, 3.) publications could be available to a broader audience if published directly by ALA.

Marjie Joramo (Brooklyn Center Branch, Hennepin County Library, 5601 Brooklyn Blvd., Brooklyn Center, MN 55429) agreed to gather the info to update the directory of ethnic publishers and resource organizations now available from ALA's Library Services to the Disadvantaged Office.

At the ALA membership meeting on Wednesday, June 22, a resolution dealing with transmitting concern for consideration of ethnic minorities at the White House Conference on Libraries was overwhelmingly approved. In the afternoon of the same day, Council approved a resolution extending the meaning of "Racism and Sexism Awareness" to include sensitivity and understanding for overcoming prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination against individuals and groups because of race, sex, creed, color and national origin.

TASK FORCE ON WOMEN:

The Women's TF accepted a proposal to establish a 9-member steering committee at their business/membership meeting. Elected to serve 2-year terms were: Diane Gordon Kadonoff (coordinator), Cynthia Johanson, Elizabeth Futas, Donna Eps, Mike Leber, Betty Lowe, Jean Porter, Betty-Carol Sellen, and Karen Jackson.

A variety of issues were discussed including the need for a political action committee. A report was also presented on the history and current status of the job roster.

The program meeting, featuring Gail Sheehy, author of PASSAGES, was an overwhelming success. An overflow crowd heard her discuss the research behind her book. She announced plans for more research and writing about persons in their 40's and 50's.

Congrats are in order to the Women's TF for the attractive brochure which they distributed at the Detroit conference. For copies of the brochure and/or a subscription to WOMEN IN LIBRARIES (\$4, individual; \$1, unemployed, student, retired; \$6, institutional), contact Kay Cassell, 44 Nathaniel Blvd., Delmar, NY 12054.

TASK FORCE ON GAY LIBERATION:

Winner of the Gay Book Award for 1977 is FAMILIAR FACES, HIDDEN LIVES: the story of homosexual men in America today, by the late Howard Brown, former health services commissioner of New York City. The book was published by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich (\$8.95) in 1975 and will be out in Harvest paperback in October.

According to coordinator Barbara Gittings, the Gay TF chose the Brown book for this year's award because it "stresses the positive lives achieved by many gay men of Dr. Brown's generation...provides the corrective of reality to society's distorted view of homosexuals...and speaks up for gay men living productive lives in the mainstream of society as no other book has done."

At the same meeting, Sol Gordon, well-known family life expert, gave a talk billed as "It's Not Okay to be Anti-Gay." Dr. Gordon is Professor of Child and Family Studies at Syracuse University and Director of the Institute for Family Research and Education.

He told the rapt audience, "Scratch an anti-gay and you'll find an anti-black, anti-Semite, anti-IRA...if we don't all stand together, we'll hang separately...Civil rights should never be decided at the ballot box." Sol Gordon received a standing ovation for his convictions and his engaging presentation.

The Gay TF meeting closed with a puppet play written by Kay Tobin and produced by Jim Mcyski, "Flaming Fundamentalist meets Football Faggot," in which David Kopay applies for a coaching job at Anita Bryant's school--and worlds collide.

'The Speaker': Does it speak for librarians?

by Jim Dwyer

The 1977 American Library Association Conference in Detroit was the site of a major struggle in the battle for racial and sexual equality. The focus of debate was "The Speaker," a film co-produced by and bearing the imprint of the Office of Intellectual Freedom of the American Library Association (OIF).

Two years ago OIF and the Association of American Publishers' Freedom to Read Committee (FRC) decided to produce a film concentrating on our rights of free speech under the first amendment. A year later Vision Associates became involved and ALA authority was delegated to an IFC subcommittee of three members including OIF director Judy Krug. In October of 1976 a script was developed and presented to the subcommittee. Zoia Horn, incoming chairperson of IFC requested information on the film from Krug, but was not sent a copy of the script. It was around this point in time that Association of American Publishers pulled out of the venture for reasons which have yet to be reported to general ALA membership.

The film was shot in January of this year, edited by Vision Associates in consultation with the IFC subcommittee, and shown to the Executive Board of ALA in late April. The Board first decided to delay release until the film could be evaluated by ALA membership, but reversed that decision on the grounds that delay would be somehow "misinterpreted." Hence the film was released in May and copies sent to advance subscribers in June despite certain misgivings by the Executive Board and before the personal members of ALA who had underwritten production costs through their dues had ever seen it.

There were special May screenings for IFC members and a few others. These showings created some controversy as evidenced by the opposition of IFC chairperson Zoia Horn and by the resolutions against the film presented to ALA membership by Councilor Nancy Kellum-Rose and by the Black Caucus of ALA.

Finally, on the evening of Sunday, June 19, "The Speaker" was shown to ALA membership. What they saw was a film in which a controversial speaker, one with the racist message of White genetic superiority, is invited to speak at a high school assembly. The film portrays the struggle between those who favor allowing the speaker on campus and those who oppose it. After intense student and community pressure and a major division of the school and community, the invitation is finally temporarily withdrawn, this being depicted as a temporary setback of intellectual freedom.

The screening to membership was followed by about twenty seconds of applause and some scattered hissing. A reactor panel consisting of school librarian Geraldine Clark, public library director Ervin Gaines and Professor Gerald Shields was then asked to present its views. All three spoke out strongly against the film.

Clark accused the film of "blaming the victim for his oppression...Subtle distortions of ideas and clever manipulations are presented and stereotypes reinforced." She also faulted the negative image of librarians and libraries in the film and the manner in which dissenters and dissent itself is presented as anti-intellectual and anti-intellectual freedom. She pointed out that "the difference between freedom and license is ignored" and requested that "because of the pervasive negative stereotyping of Black people...ALA should dissociate itself from the film."

Ervin Gaines, hardly a friend to the dissent of the sixties and early seventies, surprised the audience by his condemnation of the film. "The film provokes and taunts Blacks. It asks them to choose between intellectual freedom and the rage about their oppression...it is not too much to say that it was shameful...and can only polarize at a time when amelioration is necessary."

Shields raised a series of questions. "Why a film from the ALA Committee on Intellectual Freedom which does not address itself to the library? Why does it deal with choice in a manner which equates selection with censorship? Is it because we do not understand what we mean by intellectual freedom?" He also accused the film of failing to explore the relationship of freedom of choice to the fabric of library and societal reality.

About forty minutes of discussion followed, with only five speakers supporting the film while over a dozen protested and demanded that ALA remove its name from the film. An unscientific polling of viewers revealed that 108 rated the film excellent, 141 good, 109 fair, 235 poor, with 121 non-respondents. The house was clearly divided on the issue even though the "poor" response was clearly the top vote-getter of the five categories.

"The Speaker" was also shown on ensuing days, and on Wednesday, June 22, members reconvened for further discussion and a vote on two resolutions requesting that ALA dissociate itself from the film.

The Kellum-Rose resolution addressed itself to "the subject matter of the film (which) is, at most, peripheral to the experience of libraries and librarians in the area of intellectual freedom." The Black Caucus resolution was more comprehensive, criticizing the stereotyping, condescension, oversimplification and victimization inherent in "The Speaker." The Caucus also stated that "this film does not do justice to either the First Amendment or Intellectual Freedom" and objected to "the interjection of the issue of race relations which destroys the intent of the (film)."

A heated two hour debate ensued. Dozens of members, Black and White, and including such diverse personalities as a survivor of the Nazi Holocaust, a newly-returned Peace Corps volunteer, and incoming ALA President Eric Moon registered their opposition. A special guest (and former librarian) the Honorable Major Owens of the New York State Senate, lambasted "the secret agenda of racism" while E.J. Josey called the film "abominable, a travesty of intellectual freedom."

The vote to dissociate ALA's name from the film was extremely close and marred by confusion. It was first announced that 372 had voted for the motion and 326 against, but an "error in arithmetic" was announced and a re-addition revealed a 322 to 326 vote, a loss by only four votes. What had been an atmosphere of relief became one of tension and a re-vote was immediately requested. A few votes changed and the final tally was 318 for dissociation, 334 against.

That afternoon the debate moved to Council, the policy-making body in ALA. Because Councilors are theoretically present at Membership meetings and because the debate there had been so lengthy, a time limit was placed on debate. Given the relatively conservative nature of Council, it is not surprising that the motion to dissociate failed by a larger margin than in Membership.

Following this vote, Black Caucus member Ella Gaines Yates introduced the following motion which was eventually approved:

Sourcebook

The following are brief reviews of journals, books, and other stuff. Examples are scattered throughout the newsletter with the idea that the information given from the material is better than what is said about it.

Now be it resolved that 1) Council direct the OIF and IFC to solicit and accept questions and statements from the Black Caucus which are indigenous to the concerns and sensitivities of all Black members of ALA and membership as a whole for incorporation into the study guide; and 2) Devise an introductory statement insert for the film which will clarify the purpose of the film in terms of its utilization for discussion and teaching purposes, without intention to offend any racial/ethnic group...The introducer should be a person who commands the national respect of both minorities and all Americans."

Ideally, such measures will help focus audience attention on the racist content of the film and raise sexism-racism awareness in doing so. One has to wonder, though, whether these disclaimers will do little more than relieve liberal guilt.

After adoption of the Yates resolution, outgoing ALA President Clara Jones stepped down from the podium and expressed her view of the situation:

"A battle has taken place this week...When the smoke clears I think we will see that ALA has lost a great deal...This (the Yates resolution) might be a salve, but it does not solve the problem of 'The Speaker.' The problem has convulsed this country since 1619 when the first slave was brought to America and it is now convulsing the world...This is a film about school programming, not one about free speech...There is now renewed distrust because the black members of the association feel their humanity has been questioned. We have taken a backward step among ourselves regarding trust across lines of race."

How is it that an association which adopted a strong resolution on racism/sexism awareness only last summer can release such a racist film under its aegis? How is it that the same people who can separate the issues of free speech and kiddie-porn fail to separate the issues of free speech and program selection? How is it that the same assembly can affirm the principle of free access to all regardless of socio-economic status while simultaneously releasing a film which is patently offensive to certain racial classes?

Perhaps Gerald Shields was right when he argued that we don't really know what intellectual freedom consists of. "The Speaker...a film about freedom" is really a film about the subtleties of oppression. It does not speak for all librarians, only for the bigots in our midst.

THE COUNCIL ON INTERRACIAL BOOKS FOR CHILDREN, 1841 Broadway, New York, NY 10023, devoted a good portion of its latest Bulletin to "The Speaker." We regret that due to lack of space in this newsletter, we could not reprint excerpts from the CIBC Bulletin.

The Council has also developed a Study Guide for "The Speaker." This Guide will be printed in a forthcoming Bulletin. For copies of the feature stories on this controversial ALA film, or for a copy of the Study Guide, please contact the Council at the above address.



■ The SRRT Detroit program, "Prostitution of Information," will be available sometime early in 1978 through Guy Marsh, ALA Publishing Dept., 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL

■ Now available from the Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance, 37 S. 20th St., Philadelphia, PA 19103: edited transcripts from the Congress for Creative America. Featured are 22 eminent American artists and scientists in the \$2.50 pbk.

SUBJECT HEADINGS--PERIODICALS

■ see also Hennepin County Library Cataloging Bulletin. With all due respect to LC, CIP & OCLC, we don't see how one can professionally catalog without the HCL Bulletin. Samples can be supplied for \$1.50; subscriptions, \$12/institutions; \$5/individuals; HCL, York Ave. South at 70th, Edina, MN 55435.

■ The Plains Distribution Service (non-profit), P.O. Box 3112, Fargo, ND 58102 publishes THE PLAINS BOOK-LIST, a free, descriptive guide to small press publications from the midwest.

■ ON EQUAL TERMS: a thesaurus for nonsexist indexing and cataloging, compiled by Joan K. Marshall. The work is based upon the principles developed by the TF on Women's Committee on Sexism in Subject Headings. \$14.95 +\$1(postage) clothbound or \$9.50 + \$.75 for pbk: Neal-Schuman Publishers, P.O. Box 1687--FDR Station, New York, NY 10022.

■ SYNTHESIS: "an anti-authoritarian newsletter for citizen-worker self-management ideas and activities." This is a true info exchange on libertarian, anti-authoritarian and socialist ideas. Subscription: \$4/10 issues; 40¢, single sample. Synthesis, P.O. Box 1858, San Pedro, CA 90733.

■ Yellow WLW stickers made the Women Library Workers more visible than ever in Detroit. WLW membership (including newsletter sub.) is only \$10 annually. Send to WLW, 555 29th St., San Francisco, CA 94131.

FOOD FOR THOT

by Eric Moon

excerpted from his Presidential inaugural address, "Data Bank is two Four-letter Words," ALA Detroit, June 21.

"I would hate to see librarians, of all people, becoming fogged or bedazzled by words like information and data, to the point where they fail to emphasize with pride the broader things for which libraries stand and have always stood: knowledge, ideas, art, creativity, understanding, pleasure, awareness of self and the world around us--even, by God, wisdom. Or, as Hamill so beautifully puts it, a way of becoming human.

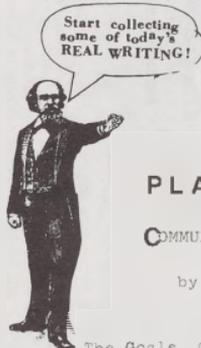
"All of that may be perhaps a rather high-flown way of saying that if we are to carve out a niche for ourselves in the formation of a national information policy, those are the kind of values we must accentuate, not the values of the searchers for material advantage in this pursuit. It is not that sci-tech and business and some other areas are not important, but that they will not be overlooked in any case. They are too profitable, too important for economic and political reasons to be ignored. But who, if not us, will remember the information needs of that poor kid in Brooklyn?"

"The arrival of compulsory education provided one escape route for those children whose parents seemed determined to establish a dynasty of ignorance. Some parents still struggle to protect their children from education but, by and large, society has come to accept education as among the rights of the young.

"The question for us, though, is, do we then accept that the child's or young adult's right of access to knowledge stops when the school doors close at three, or four? Do we believe that education happens only in school, that libraries are not educational, that they are less important, less relevant than schools?"

"It is also specious, I think, to claim that we can for long operate, side by side in public institutions, fee-based and "free" services. How long do you think that can last? When any fiscal crunch comes along, where will governing bodies press for cuts--in services that produce a return they can see, or in those whose return, while perhaps of equal value, is nothing so obvious or concrete?

"There is little doubt that we shall build in the next few years the most impressive network of bibliographic apparatus the world has ever known. But if the cost of doing that (and of maintaining it), and if the intensity of effort to achieve that goal is so blindered that it leads to a paradoxical decline in information available locally, and access to the rest filtered through a means test to fewer and fewer people, what shall we have achieved with our technology other than an Orwellian spectre?"



PLA'S LATEST-

COMMUNITY SERVICE EXHORTATION

by Bonnie Isman

The Goals, Guidelines and Standards Committee of the Public Library Association (PLA) reported new "Guidelines for Public Library Service" at ALA in Detroit. These guidelines are seen as an interim document to bridge the gap between the 1966 MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEMS, based on quantitative measures, and the totally new standards based on performance measures which the committee expects to have ready in 1985.

Committee chairperson, Peter Hiatt, introduced the new guidelines as a "mission statement" for public libraries, one which emphasizes their societal responsibilities in a world characterized by "runaway social change," "runaway exponential increase in the volume and complexity of the record of human experience" (1), "total egalitarianism" and "depletion of natural resources." According to the committee, libraries must respond to both major social trends and to unique human needs. The ideal information agency (AKA public library) would be accountable to the total community, publicly supported and controlled, with services flexible enough to meet both present and future social needs.

The guidelines themselves stress the library's obligations to continuous study of community needs and review of library objectives in terms of service output. Total community service would include programs and materials designed for all levels and ages of users and potential users.

The committee urges public libraries to recognize their responsibility to coordinate resources in all public and private libraries, information agencies and other sources for public access as needed.

While overburdened with educational mush-mush jargon, the new guidelines seem to be an honest attempt to stimulate librarians to affirm their community service role placing users first. The philosophy clearly encourages quality public library service, specifically designed to meet the needs of the community and its individuals.

Very little real substance exists, however, for the guidelines to convince those who have not already adopted this point of view. Neither do the guidelines suggest tools for decision-making. The PLA has proposed research to construct these tools, meanwhile the message is do what you can.

The Committee plans to publish the new guidelines this Fall in AMERICAN LIBRARIES, Plotnik willing. Read for yourself.



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