

When I last wrote to you, I spoke of being proud. Now I need to speak to you about being concerned.

Since assuming the responsibilities of being president of this association I have received letters from, sat in meetings with, talked with, and listened to librarians and library staff from many of the different types of libraries we have in North Carolina. And I have come to some distressing conclusions.

I have observed that ...

- public librarians seem not to have much respect for what school librarians do and feel they must do the job the schools are supposed to be doing,
- school librarians seem not to have much respect for what public librarians do and feel the public librarians do not understand the school situation,
- academic librarians (community, junior/senior college, university librarians) seem not to have much respect for what school or public librarians do and are regarded as living in the traditional ivory tower, removed from the real world, and
- special librarians operate in a world of their own which no one seems to know much about.

Now that I have your attention, let's think about what this means. I am making sweeping generalizations here, but I am using what I have heard to make an important point. I believe that these attitudes stem from a lack of knowledge and understanding of each other and the unique problems and demands each of us faces. We stereotype our colleagues and unfortunately sometimes act on those stereotypes.

At the May meeting of your Executive Board, I said these things. They were shocking, but what followed was an important, serious discussion about the role of librarians in today's society, the state of the

association, and our responsibilities as leaders in the profession.

Board members spoke earnestly and passionately about the need for librarians and library personnel to assume more leadership in this information industry ... to be more outspoken on issues that effect their funding and to tell their funders what they need ... to become more savvy about working with the media to market themselves positively.

Some of our discussion was stimulated by Howard McGinn's article "The Mourning After" which appeared in the Winter 1991 issue of *North Carolina Libraries*. We agreed with many of the startling observations he made and disagreed strongly with others; however, we agreed that we were glad he wrote as he did and provoked us into thinking about issues we have not addressed.

We need to carry these conversations beyond this Executive Board meeting. I have asked the board members to communicate with you about these concerns. Respond to me or to them. Let us know what you think. Suggest ways to address the problems you see.

We are all a part of a fabric of information resources for our users. It is the responsibility of each of us to work together to make this a seamless fabric, each portion of the fabric no weaker than any other. The citizens of North Carolina should be able to move about on the fabric without stumbling over a seam or falling through a hole or a weaving flaw.

The users of libraries are the responsibility of us all. Each one of us provides a part on the information service continuum.

In Alamance County, the Friends of the Alamance County Public Libraries deliver to hospitals a 12-month size t-shirt bearing the message "Read to Me," a copy of *Goodnight Moon*, and a reading list for new parents. From then until that child enters school, his/her "information" needs are the responsibility of the public library. From kindergarten to 12th grade his/her information needs before 3:00 p.m. are the responsibility of the school library and after 3:00 p.m., the public library. After high school graduation his/her information needs become the province of the higher education institution he/she chooses. After graduation he/she takes a job in an industry that provides a specialized library of technical resources.

But this library user has the right at any stage of life to obtain the information he/she needs. We as information professionals **must** work together to see that those resources are available, affordable, and accessible.

Ultimately, our users must be equipped to be life-long learners who can take advantage of all sources of information, whether they be at the public library, the academic library, the school library, or the special library.

We who work in these libraries need to talk to each other and learn from each other, so write about what you think and do. Submit your writing to *North Carolina Libraries*. The rest of us need to benefit from your creativity and you from ours. If library staff from **all** kinds of libraries in your area do not meet regularly, start a local library association. If one already exists, participate.

I am concerned, but I am also confident that together we **can** make a difference and provide the access to information to which our citizens have the right. This is a call to action. For too long we've segmented ourselves into categories ... school, public, academic and special. It is imperative that we now work together.

(to be continued)

From the President

Janet Freeman, President