

From the President

Janet Freeman, President

Hello? Are you out there?

In this column in the summer 1992 issue I made some rather harsh statements, and to be honest, I expected to receive some responses from you. I have actually been concerned that I'd gone too far. Now I think perhaps not.

A few people have told me casually that they read the column and agreed. Great. I appreciate their saying so, but what are we going to do about the problems I mentioned?

- ... the problem of misperceptions and lack of understanding each other

- ... the problem of communicating with our funding agencies (our bosses, the legislature, our boards, our county commissioners, our principals, etc.)

- ... the problem of approaching library service in a segmented way rather than with an eye for the big picture

The special issue of *North Carolina Libraries* which you received recently

highlighted some of these problems as well as other crises in library service. We are in crisis or teetering on the brink of crisis as a profession.

This issue focuses on telecommunications and technology and the implications for libraries ... and those who staff and use them. First let me say, I am a computer user and e-mail user. (In fact I'm one of those strange people who will go to the mat to protect my use of WordStar instead of switching to WordPerfect.) The computer at my desk has a role in almost every task I perform.

The availability of telecommunications is revolutionizing the services libraries offer and the way library personnel provide information. I think, however, we must remind ourselves that telecommunications and technology are tools, and every tool is not appropriate for every job.

For example, an automobile is not the best tool for flattening a plastic soda bottle before recycling it. You can run over the bottle with the car, but you can more easily crush the bottle with your

hands. When you need to travel several miles, a car is much more efficient and comfortable than walking on your hands.

There are problems with telecommunications. Systems go down no matter what reliability figures vendors show us. Using e-mail instead of the telephone puts a certain distance between the sender and the receiver. It is expensive. Not everyone has an affinity for keyboards. Not everyone thinks in the linear fashion often required to use a computer.

As information providers we need to be sensitive to these problems. We need to work together to see that library users learn the skills to use the most appropriate tool for accessing the information they need. We must communicate with each other and those who fund us to assure that there are not gaps in library and information services.

Again I ask ... are you out there? What do you think? How can we address these problems?

CALL FOR PARTICIPATION IN POSTER SESSION I. T. LITTLETON SEMINAR SERIES '93 THE 4TH I. T. LITTLETON SEMINAR FEBRUARY 19, 1993

The Libraries
North Carolina State University

The I. T. Littleton Seminar Program at NCSU is a continuing seminar series on major library issues sponsored by NCSU Libraries. The series was established 1987, to honor the contributions to North Carolina State University by Dr. I. T. Littleton, former Director of Libraries. The theme of the upcoming seminar is document delivery and cooperative information resource development.

A new feature of the seminar series is the introduction of a poster session program. The purpose of the poster session is to provide an opportunity for individual librarians or libraries to share graphic representations of current research, programs, or creative solutions to improving access to information. The planning committee invites interested librarians, public, academic, or corporate, to submit a poster session application.

Accepted presenters will be given a time block during the seminar to share their ideas. Deadline for the receipt of poster session applications is December 18, 1992. Final selections will be made by the planning committee; authors will be notified by January 4, 1993. Efforts are underway to include the poster session abstracts as part of the published seminar proceedings.

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