

Workshop Words

Worth Recall

I don't often say to people that I'm not a librarian. It sounds defensive. I certainly might rethink my approach to this had I another choice to make—but in the enthusiasm of youth, I was going to invent polyester, or something equally interesting. Biochemistry sounded very interesting at that point. But I have begun to use another term which I like, and which I wish more trustees would use and that is an *advocate* for libraries. It seems to me that anyone who is involved in libraries either at the career level, or simply the interest level as expressed by people like trustees, should take on the advocacy role today. Because it seems to me that we are not going to get anywhere with any of our aims and ambitions if we are not willing to stand out as advocates.

There is a tendency to regard people who go into libraries as being passive, wonderful people. (You do have that nice halo, and people really think you are nice—you are obviously putting yourself into a situation where you do a wonderful job and people don't think they have to pay for a wonderful job.) I guess what I'm saying is that in addition to visibility, we have got to be a lot noisier, and we have been. This means we're going to have to take risks. It means that even though the job you have may be comfortable, even though it is one you enjoy and don't want to lose and want to pursue, that we are going to have to stand up. In the vernacular today, it's called "being aggressive." Now, you'll notice I didn't use the word "assertive." I think assertive isn't enough. If you are doing assertive things, please offer a workshop in how to be aggressive, because that's the name of the game.

It's very interesting, I think, that in recent years, we have begun to be noticed. There was a time when librarians were ignored. Now we're beginning to turn up, and we're beginning to turn up in headlines. This one says, "Librarian jobs scarce, Pay low, Especially for Women." So, what's new? But we are being discovered. And we're being discovered by the U. S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Now, I've suggested that one of the things we have to think about is action to overcome whatever bias, prejudice, hiring practices, whatever we now have. And I would like to start with a very basic feeling that you need to be recruiters of excellent people for libraries. The library schools do recruit. I think they are no longer being regarded as dumping grounds, for people who can't think of anything else to take. And that was true in many, many schools for a long time. But I think you need to be on the alert for bright, interested, competent women who ought to go into the masters program in library science. Those of you in public libraries ought to pinpoint the page girls who start out with you, and direct them, push them towards a career in library science. I think unless we are presenting the best and the brightest, people will still feel that somehow you ought

to go into law, or you ought to go into medicine, something of this sort, rather than into libraries. We need to upgrade the pool of people who are choosing librarianship as a career. And you do this by watching people and by your own example.

Very few people understand what a masters in library science has involved. They really don't know what you did to get your masters in library science. I don't know how many of you have masters degrees. It's becoming so much more common now than it used to be, but regardless, we need to upgrade the image of the masters degree in library science. We need to make absolutely sure that those who have it make a point of having it. I am not talking about downgrading those who do not. That is not our business, and we would not do this. But we need always to stress that this is a higher degree, and that many women have it, and that this adds to competency.

Anyone who works in a bureaucracy, and you do, should remember that the name of the game is to make people look good. Nothing is more important in a sense to the success of your career than the fact that this library gets a good reputation, and that reputation is gained with teamwork. Teamwork does not mean subjugating yourself and doing all the work and never getting any credit. Teamwork simply means that you organize so that your job is an important part of the effectiveness of that library. And if you do this, then we're all made to look good, because the library then looks good, and you can pinpoint your role in achieving that goal. It is not a non-feminist goal. When you're head of your next library, you're going to want to be sure that the people who work under you are also dedicated to the idea that they can do a better job on behalf of that library, because you're going to need people who are going to make you look good, too. Unless our libraries are important to people, unless they work well, unless they do perform services, unless they are out front, then you ought to get out of the library business now, because the jobs are going to deteriorate, and the salaries are not going up. Unless you're committed to your own career as part of the career that we all indulge in in terms of promotion of library services of all kinds, then it's possible that you ought to get into something else.

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Speaking at organization meeting

NCLA Roundtable on the Status

of Women in Librarianship

March 20, 1981