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# Stand Up for Libraries

Frederick J. Glazer

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As you've been reading in the papers, there's much to do these days with the money that's not going to libraries — and it might be going to defense. All well and good, but it might give us time to reflect on the immortal words of Dr. Johnson who said, "Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel." Now with our modern messiahs of morality flaunting flags from left-side lapels and maybe with a librarian or two wrapping themselves in the colors, perhaps Dr. Johnson would accept a euphemism for the eighties, "Patriotism is the *first* refuge of a scoundrel." Having given thoughts to espousers of God and country, we add that other sacred — motherhood — for an unassailable trinity.

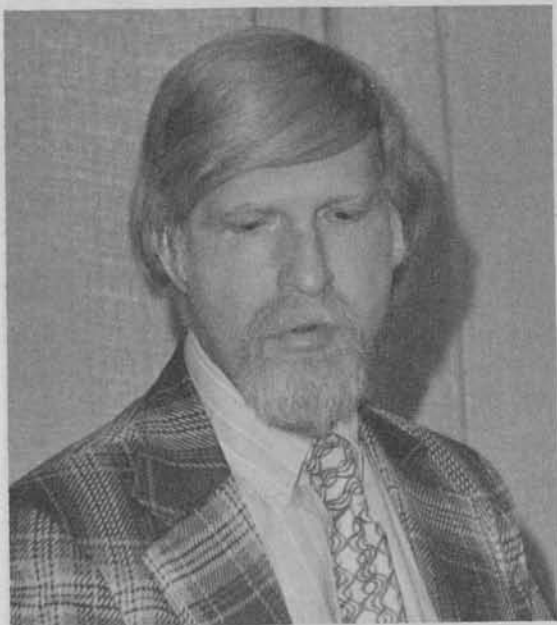
But why not expand God, country, and motherhood into a magical quartet which includes libraries? We know the wealth associated with the houses of God. There are the megabucks for the defense of the country. And if you listen to

the talk in the streets, "Those mothers have all the money." So maybe by an association with such a well-heeled trio, some of the ways to wealth can be discovered by libraries.

Now, after one hundred years, the profession has begun to master library science through expanding technology and to master library service via extension and outreach. But if we are to progress beyond the plateau of 1983, to even have a first installment on another one-hundred year policy, we must give prime time consideration to the future funding of our libraries. If not, our libraries could well become the institutional dinosaurs of the twentieth century.

We're entering an era which I like to consider "creative librarianship," one that espouses creating a climate of awareness and an appreciation for our program with the subsequent spin-off of a constituency so vocal in advocating our programs that never again will our libraries have to exist with poverty-level support. We talk about public relations, human relations, image improvement, higher visibility, and so forth, but the one catch-all phrase that I believe says it all is, to effectively campaign for improved funding of our institutions, we must "promote or perish." Or why not make it positive — "promote and prosper." Thus, it's become necessary to evaluate the reasons for this below-the-subsistence-level operation and to develop campaigns, techniques, gimmicks, or plays to enrich the coffers of the library.

Now why have we been almost a birthmark on the body politic and been powdered over, removed, or allowed to exist in place as long as we didn't become bothersome? Certainly we never enjoy the anatomical respect of the limbs of the body, even though we've developed some highly sophisticated circulation systems, and as the brains or intellect of society, we've never been treated with such heady respect. At times, we're really not much better off or regarded any higher than the products of our disposal systems. So we must by necessity change our being from the birthmark to the beauty mark. And that's where image, P.R., human relations, political adroitness, and promotion come into play. Tactics for survival.



Frederick J. Glazer is Director of the West Virginia Library Commission. His speech was featured at the First General Session of the NCLA Conference. The text is a transcription of that speech. (Photo by Frank Sparger.)

We are not promoting as an end in itself; we are promoting to create better funding situations for libraries, and it can be done. Imagine, if you will, the impact of our vast constituencies all agitating for better library support and putting the heat on funding authorities to improve the library's financial lot in life. We have more people out there who can benefit from our services than the combined enrollments of K through grad school. Yet compare the expenditures per pupil for this special group of citizens with the library expenditures per capita. We're comparing decimals to dollars.

Consider, if you will, the usual sources of funding — a governmental body, be it federal, state, or local. So what's the expected activity of services from government? To defend our shores from assault or foreign invasion? To regulate business, industry, and aspects of our public and private lives? To license pleasures and recreations, whether by hunting, fishing, "nightclubbing," or driving? All in all, government has a pretty poor product of restrictions, as to when you can hunt or fish, how late you can tinkle, or how fast you can drive. And people don't have pleasant experiences with government at any level. How many of you can imagine looking forward to a visit to City Hall, a trip to the county court, or hassling with state agency bureaus? For the average citizen, it doesn't have the anticipated excitement of a ballgame, concert, or film. Let's face it. Most interactions between citizens and governmental agencies are a source of discomfort, anxiety, and of course they're involuntary.

But there's still hope for government to do something up close, personal, and positive. The one agency which is entered voluntarily and could be the biggest and best pork barrel of all — the library. We have the answer for "What's the government done for you — and not to you lately?" It would take the ten plagues visited on the early Egyptians for the other governmental agencies to achieve our potential clientele. Hail, fire, brimstone, civil war, strife, disorder, pestilence, famine, universal welfare with two lane blacktops on every country road — all would have to eventuate before fire, police, welfare, health, agriculture, and the highway department could serve as many people as libraries. Yet we are the most insignificantly funded of any of these. And here's the irony: we can personally reach our audience in one-to-one relations every day. We don't have to wait for their house to burn or their head to be bashed. We have the capability to inform and alert each of our users of funding crises and even organize and turn them into

meaningful citizens groups or lobbies. I find this is something those other agencies cannot begin to do or, if so, certainly not with the numbers available to us. Let's face it — the Friends of the Highway Department, Friends of Welfare, and so forth just don't make it.

### Beyond the Philosophy

Now, beyond the philosophy and into the practicality of promoting and prospering. First, we should consider ourselves merchandisers of our product — library service. We're distributing information, education, culture, knowledge, and even recreation, and we're possibly going out of business. So we learn from the great and the promoters, merchandisers, and successful business firms. They've promoted and created a demand for their products, service, or business. Today's fun- and fund-seeking librarian would do well to be a cross between P. T. Barnum and Muhammad Ali. A more aggressive philosophy of librarianship is needed — one that changes us from the keeper of the books to a marketer or distributor of services, one that is patterned after the great merchandisers. After all, we're competing with all agencies of government for our share of the funding. Yet we're mired in the muck of mendicancy. We hear it's the times, they're bad. Well, have they ever really been good? Has there ever been that funding utopia for libraries? Not really. It's never great, rarely good, and mostly marginal. So we can't wait for what shouldn't be expected. It becomes a matter of redistribution, a redoing of the take, or a displacement of scarcity to some other agency. The question should begin: "Who gets what; who's getting your share; why are you not getting any?" We must promote for purposes of redistribution. Regardless of the size of the pie, you've got to take a bigger slice.

So who's doing the slicing? Governmental bodies, the Senate, the House, state legislators, county commissioners, and city councils. And it would appear obvious that for far too long, they've been unchallenged and unopposed, because in this age that's gone beyond sweet reason and into the arena, libraries are unique in the universality of their appeal. Those in office have existed there for years through clever exploitation of confrontation. It's the Lincolnian answer: "My friends here are for this, my friends here are for that, and I'm for my friends." And it happens on all levels. In the fifties and sixties, it was the great civil rights debate, an unresolved issue for nearly one hundred years because of the polarity of opinion. In the sixties and seventies, there were

debates over our involvement in southeast Asia, a seeming century of tragic proportion. Of late, you've seen the environmental wars, the nuclear protests, abortion, ERA, and scores of national, state, and local issues ranging from strip mining to collective bargaining to business hours and selling booze on Sunday. And as long as there have been equally vocal expressions both for and against, decisions are delayed or avoided, because those in office are "for my friends" on both sides.

So where are the anti-library groupies (if there are any, and I doubt it)? They certainly can't be equal to the numbers available to us. I've been advised by the president of the West Virginia State Senate that there is no known repellent for the library forces. Included under our banners are business and industry, strip mines and abolitionists, those for and against branch banking, and groups representative of both sides of other issues. But for us they're a combined force, realized and always greater. For our cause is not a special interest. It's only necessary to prepare the parade for the marches. And we do it to "promote and prosper."

Now, merchandising and product promotion have evolved to a point where libraries do not have to re-invent the wheel, but can look to General Motors, General Mills, Exxon, your neighborhood grocer, bank, or even other institutional campaigns. Look at Smokey the Bear. At one time he was so successful in stopping forest fires that he was in danger of being killed off so

that the necessity of fires for thinning out timber lands would not have been considered such an ecological disaster. Look at this figure of national recognition — the bear. We know of the docility of the three bears — Mama Bear, who said "Somebody's been sleeping in my bed," ditto Papa Bear, and from down the hall, Baby Bear's "Goodnight folks." But for a more realistic appraisal of bears, read Jack Olson's *Night of the Grizzly* to discover the natural habits of Smokey's colleagues. Now, consider the image of librarians. Just think about that for a minute while I share with you some thoughts that were given in a national medium. Perhaps you'll have some nasty comments about that medium once I read this article to you. It comes from the super-reactionary radical rag that's published in New York called the *New York Times Magazine*. (At one time I had respect for it and I didn't tear it; I photocopied it. I'm sorry I didn't tear the magazine up.) The title is called "Superstar of the New Economists," and I quote:

The buzzing halts abruptly as the man of the hour approaches the podium. Martin Feldstein is not superficially a figure to inspire such awe. At the age of forty, an unathletic five feet nine inches tall, he is fast losing his hair. He looks out at the world through horn-rimmed glasses with the earnest, essentially humorless gaze of a neighborhood librarian.

That's what the *New York Times* thinks about us. Cancel your subscriptions if you wish. Frank Colby Moore, another journalist said, "Journalists



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have always been our most old-fashioned class, being too busy with the news of the day to lay aside the mental habits of fifty years before." But it's those fifty-year-old habits that are being sent out over their medium. What happened when American Motors wanted to introduce a new car, the Javelin? They said, "We've got a new, sharp, hot, sexy sports car — not the type your average librarian would be seen riding." And you see what's happened to American Motors lately. The next thing I'd like to remind you of are the commercials you see on television. We have librarians in television commercials. We're out there on a bookmobile, and a person comes on and says, "Hey, I need some help." The librarian opens up the drawer, and what do they pull out? Not Frank Harris or Henry Miller, but Ex-Lax. Is it because the librarian has got her arms crossed, got that sour-lemon, that the-Edsel's-coming-back look on her face? We're good for selling Ex-Lax, so maybe we've got some role. (Loosen people up. I don't know. It's our image.)

If libraries and librarians will begin to become conscious of promotion, we've got a better chance of getting the crowd into our tents and having them convinced of the purity, body, flavor, and righteousness — all good beer-brewing terms — that we offer in library service. The traditionally accepted low profile of libraries, held by state and local administrators, needs to be elevated by vigorously promoting the library to these funding

bodies. Hard selling libraries to the public is necessary if we are to create a significant demand for our services. Once an awareness of libraries is established to a far greater degree than is now apparent, an agitated citizenry becomes the muscle used to wedge open the door for expanded library service. Librarians need to be as effective in informing and activating their patrons concerning funding crises as the NRA is in alerting its members to impending gun control legislation. Perhaps millions and millions of library users could accomplish for libraries what only hundreds of thousands have done for trigger squeezers. The NRA has effectively blocked any legislation which in their view would be hostile to the gun owners. Even after the gunning down of JFK, RFK, Martin Luther King, Governor Wallace, and President Reagan, you've seen no significant gun control laws. And this has been accomplished with a membership of only one million plus. (Let me pause for a moment and say that I have no grief against the NRA. This is purely for illustrative purposes. If somebody wants to go out on Saturday and kill Bambi's mother, that's their business.)

Now, consider the number of library users and the power and influence if they were organized. Aggressively promoting the library to capture this public and the funding authorities must be done with the same intensity that sells cars, cereals, deodorants, Christmas Seals, and campaigns for the disease funds. As with all for-profit-making and commercial enterprises, high and repeated usership is needed to ensure continuation. So too must libraries be able to show funding fathers and mothers that our institutions can and are attracting larger numbers of the population on a continuing basis. And being an institution dealing in services should not cause us to slide away from hard selling or heavy-handed sales techniques if that's what's needed to get across our message. Let's use what's become a way of life — inflation — to enrich our budgets. Embrace inflation; don't fight it. Develop a Pentagon mentality. Expand in ever-increasing lots the justifications for your arsenals of information. Let's show the funders we can have high kill ratios, massive body counts, or as popularly expressed, bigger bangs for the buck.

### New Accounting Methods

Now, how do you do this? It's easy with the new, all-improved accounting method. We can take for ourselves the same advantages that businesses have when you see annual reports reflect-



National Public Radio's Bob Edwards addresses the Public Library Section program during the conference. (Photo by Frank Sparger.)

ing greater profits, larger tax write-offs, or whatever else is opportunistic — all by the simple phrase, “changed method of accounting”. Here’s my proposal. First, just double your circulation. It doesn’t take any great degree of schooling to double any number. Use a calculator, multiply it by two, put the same number down twice and add it up. You can do this with a single simple act of calculation. Convert an annual circulation figure from 50,000 to 100,000; 200,000 to 400,000; anything, just double it. Whatever you have, just double. Instant efficiency. High and repeated user-ship. And it’s quick, easy, and legitimate. You all know what it takes to circulate materials. One, the patron (if they’re lucky) finds a book, if not the book they want, any book — but they can find a book if they’re in a library. Two, it’s manually, photographically, mechanically, electronically, or automatically checked out; but that’s just the start. Three, if it’s not back on time, there’s an overdue notice, second, third, fourth, court order, and then pick the guy up. Four, perhaps the book is ultimately returned. Five, it’s checked in but, no, the patron doesn’t return it to the shelf from where it was borrowed; either a page or a recent library school graduate has to organize these materials and hopefully return it to the right place on the shelf or at least the right section. The point is that it is much more costly, and much more labor is involved, getting the book back than getting it out. That is, unless you’re running a one-way library, and that can’t last very long either. Are we credited with this round trip? I say, “No.” You’re reporting 100,000 circulations; report 200,000 circulation transactions. People borrow money; banks lend money — it’s a two-way activity. (It’s like the commercial: “Double your pleasure; double your fun.” Double your count; double your books.)

We are doubling our numbers and stating our case when we report and plead for funds. We’re doubling our body count when we try to get bucks for books, and it works. West Virginia this year will lead the nation in circulation transactions with fourteen per capita. We went from seven last year, and the legislature can’t understand how efficient we are. They want us to run the rest of state government. Now, for another comment about inflation, for the more adventurous among you. The new one (remember it) is materials handled. The ten-point multiplier — an old trick learned from that ever reliable Department of Defense. Most borrowers don’t rush to the library, grab a book, and check it out; they linger, fondle, caress, and handle many books until they find the one they want (book or nonprint material — the same

with newspaper, magazines, records, and other offerings by the library). The materials handled are far more pervasive than we realize. Using the ten-point multiplier, we have another high body count to report. (Be cautioned, however, we’re talking about materials handled by the patron, not handling the patron. There are enough problems of the raincoat-in-the-stacks variety without librarians getting involved in patron-handling.)

A loud noise must be heard. Bombs, not BBs, must be used as our weapons in the assault on the citadels of funding. Think of the sales resulting from the graphic approach used to extol Preparation H. And now there’s the not-so-subtle verbiage of Wet Ones — all aimed at scatological bodily functions or malfunctions. But the point is that a condition, whether existent or not, must be created so that your product can solve the problem. One of the great merchandisers, promoters, and ad men — Albert D. Lasker — inflicted halitosis upon the nation in an effort to move gallons of a patented remedy, Listerine. Its success has never run down, and it has opened the door for chlorophyll products, MF-90, and scores of remedies which resulted from an exotically named itch, odor, or uncomfortable feeling. This technique was effectively applied to the library world a few years back when the state of Virginia woke one morning and discovered through a promotional campaign that it suffered from “library lag.” The name itself seemed to indicate irregularity, clogged plumbing, or abdominal discomfort. And the cure was obviously better-funded libraries and extended services. Brochures with this accusing statement were distributed by tens of thousands to library users and non-users alike. A pre-addressed, perforated panel containing space for the patron’s name, address, additional comments, and another statement were fired off to all members of the state legislature. The results showed a 50 per cent increase in state funds for libraries, a greater awareness of the poverty of library programs, and, more importantly, citizen involvement. In the words of that great Philadelphian, Tug McGraw, “You gotta believe.” And West Virginia, “Amen. We’ve been saved. We believe.” In less than a decade, state aid in West Virginia went from 4¢ per capita to \$2.52. The percentage of increase is so great that I’m not sure how to figure it out. But in real money, if your library served 100,000 people, your cash grant would have gone from \$4,000 to over one quarter of a million dollars. So it can be done. It helps to have a governor named Rockefeller who led ten thousand library marchers on a parade through the city. Then sixty-five thousand West Virginians spent three

days celebrating Library Encounters. From then on, state legislators became true believers also — not saved, but true believers. We are yearly acknowledging legislative largesse with an annual Library Appreciation Day dinner, which has a 90 per cent turnout of senators and delegates who are feted by the faithful, usually numbering in excess of six hundred from all areas of the state. Timing is everything, and it's important to have House and Senate finance hearings while the legislators are still under the glow from the previous evening's libations (read "cheap whiskey"). It's tough for them to disavow libraries. We're not candidates for the confrontation waltz. They can only say, "It's not enough; it's a bad year," except that, remember, it's time for redistribution. For too long, we've been deprived and impoverished while other agencies weren't. It's their turn in the barrel.

### **Persuasion, Agitation, Participation**

My point is that the slick stuff selling razor blades and panty hose has been successful, whereas our dignified justification for public service — as one of the journals says, "People need us" — obviously has undersold our product to the point that people are not aware that they need us, ten million Americans are without library service, and very few of us live in a utopia of overfunding. The commercial pap appeals to the beer guzzler, the hair-rolled, and the millions who spend lifetimes in front of the tube and probably aren't concerned a bit with the library. Now, the pap used to entice this audience can helpfully serve as a guideline for us — our own pap program. PAP, that is, Persuasion, Agitation, and Participation of that good old Agnewian term, the previously silent majorities. When our goals of funding and service are achieved, perhaps we can for a time retreat to

that quiet dignity where we won't have to sell the library.

Now how does Persuasion, Agitation, and Participation — PAP — relate to libraries or improving their support? Imagine various groups in your community being turned on to the promised services of a good library. The traditional items, the new trends, sights, sounds, information, and something for everybody. It's not really pie in the sky, just a solid library program. The persuasion does work, and crowds are discovered to be marching on your library. You don't have the goods. What next? An agitated citizenry, constituency, student body, or users are then making their desires known to funding authorities, and the silent non-library-user is participating in a campaign to call attention to increased support for library programs. It's not a seven-day or two-week change, but takes a year-round welter of activities involving teen clubs, civic clubs, housewives, househusbands, businessmen, businesswomen, educators, senior citizens, and conglomerations of people who are ready to accept a cause. But it can work, and the beauty of the program is the product you are pushing. Even if the technique resembles that of a used car salesman, the aluminum siding contractor, or an unsolicited peddler, the result is getting people involved in the Billy Graham adjectives of purity, goodness, righteousness, wholesomeness, and salvation — all offered by your library. It's obvious that our level of service and the strength of our collections are results of adequate financial appropriations. To compete for public moneys with the other academic departments, the sanitation departments (and the two are not necessarily related), the fire departments, and many other banqueters at the public table, we've got to broadcast our story, turn on the listeners, or else be content with the crumbs. If all these fail, our last hope is to learn the Ali shuffle.