

*Happy
Holidays!*

... in touch with ...

TALTA

Peace.

"...in touch with ...TALTA" is published irregularly about 5 times a year by TALTA. Copies are available to all CALT/ABC TALTA members. Enquiries and articles should be forwarded to the address at the bottom of this page. Advertising space is available @ \$10.00 per half page and \$20.00 per full page.

OLD BUSINESS

September Tours

...Touche Ross: Two library technicians and one librarian are kept busy serving a staff of 200 in this international accounting firm at First Canadian Place. 80% of the staff are auditors and 20% are management consultants. Half of the library patrons are from the latter group.

The collection contains information on accounting as well as a broad range of subject matter. Journals, newspapers, loose-leaf services, directories, annual reports, Ontario statutes, their own consultants' reports, and computer data bases are used frequently. There are also some books in the collection.

They use a card catalogue and a ledger circulation system. Many materials are borrowed on I.L.L. to help fulfill their changing information needs. The library is part of a "terrific" network of downtown libraries. 14 TALTA members attended this tour given by Barbara Dance in the plush and comfortable, but tomlike library decorated in grays, browns, and blue. (By Sally Clark)

...Legislative Library: The tour at the legislative library was conducted by Susan Waitman and Mary Dickenson. Many changes have taken place at the Legislative Library. A wide range of renovations and new services have increased the number of users.

A research department was developed to prepare research materials for the Members of Parliament. The library staff aids that department as well as directly serving the Members of Parliament, and other government personnel.

The collection is of a general nature, since information is needed in all areas, but it does specialize in government documents. Also, the library is a depository library for federal government documents.

All of us at the Legislative Library tour enjoyed it and we found it to be very informative, thanks to our tour guides, Mary and Susan. (By Rita Piazza)

October Workshop

30 members attended the three brief, but informative speeches followed by a scrumptious lunch catered by Le Select Bistro.

...Veronica Brunka spoke about the 11 year old Ontario Government Librarians' Council that she chairs. The council is an informal

network of government libraries with regular committees such as the ones on reference sources, and on training and staff development. They developed uniform procedures such as the use of their own I.L.L. forms between ministry libraries, and a common form for on-line search information statistics. The council publishes a directory entitled Libraries and Resource Centres in the Government of Ontario. Members of the council will perform manual searches for each other.

...Shirley Morrison enlightened us about the Sheridan Park Research Community formed 16 years ago. 14 member companies have laboratories arranged campus style in the Mississauga park. The Board of Directors is made up of company representatives. Annual dues of \$9-12,000 per member company help pay for the conference centre, continuing education, recreation programs, etc. Associate memberships are available to companies and colleges not located there. Besides the committees like those on safety and social topics, they have the Library and Information Science Committee. Although the companies represent diverse subject areas this active committee has enabled the companies to share resources as well as professional contacts, on-line information, continuing education, academic and industrial relations, and lobbying efforts.

...Christine MacDonald described the work of the Networking Committee of the Special Libraries Association. She defined informal vs. formal networks. She told us about projects like the one on electronic mail, and about workshops that this active group presents. (By S.Clark)

Valerie Walton compiled the following bibliography that was distributed at the workshop entitled Reading for Working Women:

Frazer, Karen. The Women's business directory: the authoritative sourcebook of women in business. Metro Toronto edition. Toronto: Bestsellers, 1981. 103 p.

Harragan, Betty Lehan. Games mother never taught you: corporate gamesmanship for women. New York: Warner Books, 1977. 399 p. (\$3.50)

Ion, Sam. Dear Sam: advise to the working woman. Toronto: Personal Library, 1980. 256 p. (\$7.95)

Kennedy, Marilyn Koats. Office politics: seizing power wielding clout. New York: Warner Books, 1980. 299 p. (\$2.95)

Welch, Mary-Scott. Networking: the great new way for women to get ahead. New York: Warner Books, 1981. 364 p. (\$2.95)

TALTA and Placement (presented at the Workshop)

There are several obvious reasons why people join professional associations, but the prime reasons are job related, i.e., contacts, keeping up with the field and finding a job.

Your friends and acquaintances at TALTA meetings can keep you up on salaries, working conditions and relationships of workers.

Associations are often used by personnel departments of companies and institutions to find people with appropriate backgrounds to fill positions they have open. This gets them right to the source, cutting out advertising time and expense.

For these reasons TALTA set up a placement service in 1978.

Our Service. The TALTA placement service is provided to act as the middle man. We do not contact you, rather you tell us that you want a job and we match your resumé to the jobs that come to us. Your resumé is photocopied and given to prospective employers. It is up to these "prospective employers" to contact you.

We do not contact advertisers regarding people on file as this is

viewed as the job searchers responsibility. If, however, you think you missed an advertisement we do clip and retain copies of ads so you could call me.

We provide a quality control. That is, if a job is advertised that uses the term library technician incorrectly or if the term library technician has not been used and should have been, we contact the advertiser. A form letter and a copy of the definition of standards, as approved by CALT/ABC in May 1977, is sent.

Letters had been sent in the past presenting our service to the colleges and other professional library associations. This is about to be done again. The letter describes our service and offers a suggestion of cooperation.

During 1981 I have received twenty-eight resumé's. Nine of these resumé's are no longer active as the people are now working. Four want part time or a particular location and fifteen are either unemployed or "just looking".

There are seventy jobs that I have been made aware of in the first nine months of 1981. Forty-one of these jobs come to me by telephone. Twenty-nine were in the newspapers.

There has been an increase in part time and contract jobs available. This trend is a result certainly of the economy and also of the mini-baby-boom. The governments are resorting to contract employees to get around the hiring freeze. Often these contract jobs do become permanent positions.

Speaking of trends and for all of you who are working on B.A.s at night, a large publisher (of magazines and books) called the other day and asked what library technicians can and can't do. Of course, I told this personnel director there was nothing a technician could not do. He took me at my word because a few days later he called and said that rather than hire a librarian he was now looking for a library technician with a B.A.

Resumé's. Our service will only work for you if you send me a resumé. This can be done through the Canadian Postal Service addressed: Information Centre, Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, Head Office, Commerce Court, Toronto, Ontario M5L 1A2 to my attention or through your local branch of the Bank of Commerce addressed to my attention, Head Office, Commerce Court, CCW3, Information Centre.

Your resumé is your personal advertisement so please make sure it's neat and that it is typed. And for my purposes make sure it photocopies well. Remember you needn't write your autobiography - be brief. Also, the best method of organization is a chronological one. Active involvement in the association, i.e., positions held, committees headed, looks especially good.

If you have special requirements, i.e., location, type of library, salary level, please attach on a separate piece of paper so that I will not direct your name to prospective employers and waste your time and theirs.

We have a form available for those of you who don't have a resumé worked up already, but a personally authored resumé will tell a much better story about you. Just use our form as a temporary file copy until you have one ready.

Other services and numbers. Special Libraries Association has a placement service that handles library technicians too. Their placement contact is Pamela Smith, 367-8101. Send resumé's to 286A Glen Forest Road, Toronto M4N 2A4.

Don't forget your alma mater. Ryerson has a posting board outside of the Library Arts offices. This board is meant for Ryerson graduates. Seneca offers its grads a job registration service. There is a book in the placement office with jobs listed. Seneca will call you when new jobs come in.

The Ontario Librarians Association hotline (363-3380) has had jobs for library technicians. The hotline is a recording that gets updated as the jobs come in.

Also, each region of CAIT/AFC has a job contact person. Call me for the name and number if you want to relocate.

Salaries. The most popular question asked is that of what salary can library technicians expect. I can't answer that. Salaries are hard to predict because so much depends on the size of the library, the size of the staff, the position of the library as part of the whole, and the position of the institution/company in our economy, the level of responsibility to be held.... A starting library technician can anticipate \$11-12,000 and experienced technicians are making \$25,000. Often, I do not discuss salary in any detail with prospective employers as most answer that it depends on the individual and her experience.

One fault with our service is that there is no follow-up by me, by the employers, or by job seekers so I can't tell if the service is working. Please - if you get a job call and let me know so that I can take you out of the active file.

The other point that I should make about this service is that it is a volunteer job and we want to help you, but remember much of the time spent is my company's time and while they're pretty understanding....

The market for library technicians is bright. If you have a vague interest in trying a change put your resumé on file and wait for that "plum" of a job to come along. (By Peta Shelton)

Questionnaire Results

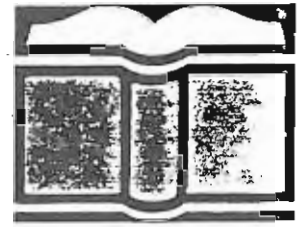
Answers to Rita's August questionnaire about meetings were tallied with the following results: Meetings will be held monthly on rotating evenings at 7 p.m. Members also voted in favour of more workshops.

Reminder

Membership dues are not due until Mar. 30, 1982. Fees will remain as follows: Student \$7, Senior Citizen \$7, Graduate \$25, Associate \$25, and Institutional \$35.



Ontario Association of Library Technicians/
Association des Bibliotechniciens de l'Ontario
P.O. Box 682
Oakville, Ontario
L6J 5C1



TO: REGIONAL PRESIDENTS

FROM: PROVINCIAL PRESIDENT

Following the October 3rd meeting, I felt a need to enlighten the regions as to the Executive's progress and to answer some of your queries concerning the different projects that the provincial would like to undertake.

According to different reports received, it seems that the following are your main concerns: newsletter editors, essay contest, Proposal for Change and for some, the funding committee.

As far as the essay contest is concerned, the committee has been set up and has already submitted the guidelines, the rules and the names of the English judges. The committee presented their report at the October 3rd meeting and it was accepted by the Board. The Sudbury region is responsible for translating the rules and, with the help of Ottawa, is trying to find qualified persons to judge the French essays. The French names will be submitted to the Board at the November 28th meeting. The Public Relations Co-ordinator has sent out notices to different journals and to Library Techniques programs publicizing the contest. The committee has sent notices to all libraries in Ontario; it now awaits the submission of essays from Library Technicians.

Past-president, Paulette Thibault has agreed to be convenor of the Proposal for Change Committee and has been advised of all the regional representatives. They will try to have their first meeting in November or at their earliest convenience.

The funding committee had a 1st meeting in Oct. and will present their report at the November 28 Board of Directors and Executive meeting. I wish at this point to clarify the following: the committee to look into funding has not been disbanded. It has been turned over to the Board and the provincial executive, and has consequently become a presidential committee. The previous funding committee which was headed by C. Boardman, was disbanded as of May 1981. Please refer to the minutes of the last ABM for the exact motion (your director has a copy).

Possible editors for the newsletter have been found. Hopefully, the Board will agree to their nomination at the November 28th meeting.

As you can see, we have tried to tie up any loose ends. Most projects have either been completed or are in full swing. I would

like now, to give you an overview of the work done by the Board of Directors and the Provincial acclaimed Executive, between the months of June and October:

a) four regions submitted the names of their graduates and letters of congratulations were sent;

b) letters were sent to different library schools (University of Toronto, Western, McGill) asking them to allow us to speak to the future librarians about library technicians;

c) over 240 letters were mailed to past members who have not renewed their membership;

d) the Directory/Annuaire has been mailed. We added two new sections: a geographical map (inside front cover), and an alphabetical list of members (names) by region;

e) Niagara has accepted the responsibility for the convention issue of the newsletter. Translation is now in the works;

f) Convention Procedures Manual is now at the typing stage. An English glossary has been compiled and it is being revised. Translation of the glossary will follow;

g) press releases were sent for the following: the Niagara Convention, the new Provincial Executive, the Essay Contest. The Public Relations Co-ordinator has sent a press release on the Thunder Bay convention, to all library journals and regional branches.

To pursue OALT/ABO's goals and objectives of raising our profile and to promote ourselves in new fields, we as an association must take the initiative. In this quest, the Executive has proposed two new projects: a) job survey; b) a brochure on the library technician. These projects are not to be referred to any committee, they are the tasks of the OALT/ABO Board of Directors and the Provincial Executive. Preliminary work has been done by the Directors and Executive to determine the feasibility of these projects. The November 28th meeting will determine the continuation of these undertakings.

I personally feel that the projects will benefit OALT/ABO members. However, a prerequisite for the success of our endeavors is total support from the regions. So, please reconsider your position on these two propositions. If you have any questions about them please contact me for more details. May we remind you that you are always welcome to the Board of Directors and Provincial Executive meetings. May I suggest that you attend the next one, on November 28.

Come and see that WE are working for YOU!



NEW BUSINESS

Continuing Education Courses

Seneca is offering the following Library Techniques courses from Jan. to Apr. 1982:

- 210 - Books, cataloguing & subject analysis (M&W)
- 212 - Fiction collections in public & school libraries (T)
- 213 - Order work (M)
- 411 - Human relations & supervisory skills (M)
- 412 - Reference II (T)
- 413 - Children's work (Th)
- 414 - Special libraries (W)
- 415 - Field work seminar (Th)

Current Membership

Welcome! to the new members who bring the total up to 143:
Karen Jones Alicia Friese Carol Harding Marvot Mason Roberta Tripp
M. Olivia Perch Kathryn Dennis Sharon Bentley Traceyann Langley

Old TALTA Newsletters Wanted

To complete our archives collection we need copies of the following issues: vol. 1 no. 4 ; all of vol. 2, 3, and 4 ; and vol. 6 no. 2 + . Call Sally Clark to arrange photocopying if you have any of these issues.

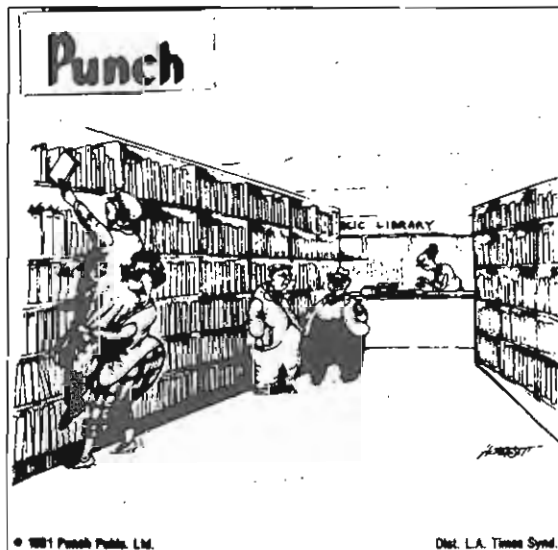
Salary Survey

A salary survey is needed for TALTA members. The last salary survey was done in 1976 by OALT/ABO. A second survey was attempted in 1979, but the response was too low for any of the results to be valid. The committee would evaluate some salary survey forms, keeping in mind TALTA's needs and objectives, send out the forms and tabulate the answers. If you are interested in chairing the committee, or working on it, call Pat Petruca. This committee should be in operation by January 1982.

Future Meetings

If you have an area of specialization that you would like to share with other library technicians, or if you can give a tour of your library please give me a call. Thanks, from Rita Piazza.

Meetings are being planned for Jan. 18, Feb 16, and Mar. 20 at 7 p.m.



"Whereas the other one wouldn't even give you the time of day."

Executive 1982-83

TALTA's year will soon be ending and with the ending is another beginning - a beginning for another executive that is! If you are interested in helping your organization grow and develop, what better way than working with the executive? Positions open: Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Board of Directors' Representative, Newsletter Editor, and Publicity Coordinator (new position).

*Publicity Coordinator

A new executive position is evolving at TALTA - that of Publicity Coordinator. The duties of this position are that of promoting TALTA, in as many ways as possible: letters, advertising, etc. As this is an executive position, an appointment will be made until the elections at the Annual General Meeting when the nominees for this position will be elected. If you're interested in this position, call Pat Petrusa, (H) 691-5440 or (W) 978-8619.

SUPPORT YOUR ASSOCIATION - TAKE A POSITION OR NOMINATE A CANDIDATE

For the 1982 annual general meeting we would appreciate nominations from the membership for the following positions:

- Vice-President
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Board of Directors' Representative
- Newsletter Editor
- Publicity Coordinator.

Please feel free to volunteer for these positions.

Please give this some thought and send in your nominations to:

Nominations - TALTA
45 Woodbine Avenue, Apt. A
Toronto, Ont. M4L 3P1

The attached form may be used. Also note that there is space for any member who would like to apply for one of these positions.

I nominate the following member _____ for
the position of _____.

I, _____ am willing to accept nomination for the
position of _____.

Ontario Association of Library Technicians/
Association des Bibliotechniciens de l'Ontario
P.O. Box 682
Oakville, Ontario
L6J 5C1



NEW VIEW IN '82

The 9th Annual Convention of the Ontario Association of Library Technicians / Association des Bibliotechniciens de l'Ontario (OALT/ABO) is being held May 13-15, 1982, at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, Ontario. The theme of the Convention is the "New View in '82" with a proposed slate of 15 different workshops. For further information and registration forms please contact:

LaRea Moody, Conference Chairperson
Thunder Bay Region
P.O. Box 3332
Thunder Bay, Ontario P7B 5J8

ESSAY CONTEST

OALT/ABO is pleased to announce that it is sponsoring an annual research essay contest in order to encourage and promote a continuing dialogue between library technicians and other related professions.

The judging panel consists of librarians, library technicians and English and French specialists who are recognized authorities in their fields. Essays may be submitted in either French or English and will be judged in the language of submission.

Prizes will be awarded for first, second, and third places and for three runners-up.

Further details may be obtained by writing to:

Andrew Porteus, Chairman
OALT/ABO Essay Contest
P.O. Box 611
Niagara Falls, Ontario L2E 6V5

GUIDELINES FOR JUDGING ESSAYS

Essays will be judged based on the following criteria.

1. Content - is the information being presented relative to the topic selected?
2. Presentation/Organization - is the essay set up as specified in the rules? - is the essay well set up, logical?
3. Style - is the essay well written? fluent? grammatical?
- how is spelling? footnoting? referencing? quoting?
4. Research - was the essay well researched and thorough?
- were the sources valid? i.e. - was current material used where applicable?

ESSAY CONTEST RULES

1. Open to all library technicians and library technician students; both members and non-members of OALT/ABO. Not open to the Board of Directors and Provincial Executive of OALT/ABO, members of the Essay Contest Committee, or their immediate family.
2. Topic can be any aspect of library or library-related work, preferably dealing with the library technician in some way.
3. Essays are to be typed, double-spaced, with $1\frac{1}{2}$ " side margins, $1\frac{1}{2}$ " top margins, and 1" bottom margins.
4. Essays should have a title page stating the title of the paper and the name of the author. Pages are to be numbered in the top right hand corner.
5. Essays should be between 2,000 and 5,000 words long, and be fully referenced and footnoted at the end of the paper.
6. A brief biography of the author should be included on a separate sheet of paper including name, address, telephone number, where the author is employed or attending school, the school graduated from and the year of graduation.
7. A brief outline/abstract should be included on a separate sheet of paper stating the aims and objectives of the essay.
8. Essays may be submitted in English or French, and will be judged in the language of submission.
9. Essays will be judged anonymously.
10. Prizes are:

| | |
|------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1st prize | \$100.00 |
| 2nd prize | \$ 50.00 |
| 3rd prize | \$ 25.00 |
| Runners-up | \$ 5.00 (maximum of 3 runners-up) |
11. In case of ties, the prize money for the two positions tied for will be split evenly by the winners.
12. Prizes will be awarded only if essays meet standards set by the Committee. Not all prizes need necessarily be awarded.
13. Decision of the Committee is final.
14. All essays become the property of OALT/ABO and may be published in the OALT/ABO newsletter or other publication. All other publication in whole or in part is forbidden without the written permission of OALT/ABO.
15. By entering the contest, participants agree to abide by the contest rules.
16. Winners will be announced in the OALT/ABO newsletter and other library publications.
17. Essays should be submitted by April 30, 1982 to:

Andrew Porteus
Chairman, OALT/ABO Essay Contest
P.O. Box 611
Niagara Falls, Ontario
L2E 6V5

Saudi Arabia

The following article was submitted by one of TALTA's founding members and a graduate of Seneca's first Library Technician class in 1969. She recently returned from a two year stay in Saudi Arabia where her husband worked on a Bell Canada Project. (Other articles of hers have been published in OALT/ABC newsletter/nouvelles.)

I wish I could set down the words to evoke the mood of Saudi Arabia for you. I found that the colours were beautiful. Where we are so used to green and vibrant colours, the people of the desert enjoy all sorts of pale mauves, roses, and bronze with their desert beige. We visited the country southwest of the capital city of Riyadh in the early morning and the butte formations are quite spectacular with their various hues. Nearby is a drifting sand dune area called the Red Sands of Ghat Ghat and that is just what they are. Patterned with the wind and cresting like a wave of water they are something to see in the bright sunlight of mid morning. It is possible to drive many miles of well paved road in the desert, and in the spring season, February and March, you will probably see some wildflower bloom. In the wadis, dry river beds, usually there is moisture in the spring season (although no actual rainfall) and so baby iris and a lovely small starlike yellow flower bloom, casting a coloured haze over that part of the desert landscape. We enjoyed camping overnight in the desert occasionally, and it was a moonscape, eerie, beautiful and definitely lonely!

Friday morning there is the holy day activity with the men only attending mosque and their women squatting on curbs and in the open market enveloped in their black abayas - a headcovering that extends to mid calf length and usually made of black nylon sheer. The women are veiled, the town women in a double layer of black cotton netting tightly swatched to the contours of their face, and the Bedouin women in the free hanging black veil with the eye slits. It is an exciting market atmosphere afterwards. The "suqs" are like the middle eastern bazaars with the long winding alleys lined with small cupboardlike shops selling all sorts of goods. Spices, carpets, cloaks, ghutras (the men's headdress), childrens' clothes and gold. The gold suqs are something to see. As all Saudi women "wear" their bank accounts there is a stunning display on counters, festooning ceilings, lining walls and draped on the chests and strung up the arms of many women. Gold glitters everywhere. It is just recently that the banking system has been expanded to allow women to have a bank account and deposit in the usual way. Heretofore, consequently, anything owned by a Saudi woman she could wear!

There is sometimes an active sidewalk trade in turquoise rings, long dangling earrings and bangles. The only actual tradeswomen selling in the markets of Riyadh were the Bedouin women dealing in antique and otherwise silver Bedouin jewellery and "lulu", the name for the strands of baroque pearls originally from the Arabian Gulf. This is a marvellous opportunity to bargain - these ladies are friendly and most often invite you as another woman to enter her stall and sit on a carpet

covered box so one could delve into all manner of old cookie tins, tobacco cans, cloth pouches, etc. and handle, fondle and inspect all her wares. On one occasion, just at sunset, another friend and I were visiting one of the Bedouin ladies, Oom Abdullah, and as the men were in the mosque and none others present excepting ourselves, she lifted her veil and we had a lovely sign language visit about her wares. She had a broad weather lined face, huge smile and a turquoise of some size implanted in her nose!

As interesting as their wares, are the hands of these women. The designs in henna are their form of cosmetic. The decoration of the palms of their hands with intricate designs, vine like, arabesque patterns of dots and dashes will often tell a story. When a young Saudi wife of my husband's interpreter came to visit us, she had her hands decorated with a pale orange design. When I enquired of her husband the origin of the design and the colour, he commented that it was a "wash and wear" design (thence the pale colour) especially denoting her visit to a "westerner's home".

An Arab Moslem wife spends her time with her female relatives, her home and her children. There are no women in the work force in Saudi Arabia. The teachers and nurses, the only occupations able to be filled by females in the country are occupied by Egyptians and Phillipinos and a few other western women. The home life is cloistered, and usually the woman does not eat or spend time in the salon if there are other men in the home visiting. When my husband visited business associates not in the elite circle, their wives were very definitely in the background, making evidence of themselves only in the display and abundance of food offered as hospitality. During any street association I enjoyed with them in my own town of Riyadh and during visits to other parts of the country with my husband, I found them to be friendly and curious. One occasion when I was garbed in the costume of long dress, abaya and black veil, squatting down on the sidewalk to look at some turquoise rings on the fingers of my saleslady, she looked me directly in the eyes (through veiling, mind you) nodded her head and patted my hand. Sisters under the veil!

We travelled to most parts of the country during our stay, and of course my husband was hither and yon many times with me in tow as he would be going to isolated desert towns and villages and there is no hotel accommodation. He had some marvellous experiences at local "inns", particularly the breakfasts of coffee, goat milk cheeses and pita bread. On one of our trips to the southwest part of the country, the landscape was very different with the step farming, spectacular drive down the escarpment from 9,000' to the coastal plain and snorkelling in the Red Sea. The crafts are mostly woven tent flaps and rugs, but in this area there is the art of basketweaving and so a little excitement to shop for these in the marketplaces.

I spent a few days working in the American school, library duty of course, and enjoyed seeing the western and international community offspring having a wonderful time, doing all the normal playground, school work and library things. The library was American funded and as an APC was allowed most curriculum associated literature. So it is reassuring to know that the children of foreign businessmen at least in the city of Riyadh are living a close-to-normal life at school and at home, but forget the

hockey arenas, baseball diamonds and bicycle paths.

One especially interesting and time-consuming activity I enjoyed was the work with the International Women's Group. This is a wide organization helping women posted to other countries adjust to the social conditions, find others from their country and culture with whom to visit, and orient themselves with the city of Riyadh.

The time we spent investigating this interesting and picturesque country and culture was unforgettable. We met friendliness and hospitality in each instance, so enjoyed our visit to Saudi Arabia. Thank you for the opportunity to share some of our adventures.

Doris Hird

Comments on this and any other articles would be appreciated. Please call, or write to your editor.

* * * * *

Health, Safety and VDTs

The video display terminal is fast taking over our basic information processes as we know them today. As more and more businesses and libraries turn to implementing VDTs, there has been an increase of concern questioning the safety of these modern machines. As a result of this concern, a conference was organized to help the workers using the VDTs educate themselves to the potential hazards they are now being exposed to.

The conference was held at OISE, October 16-18, 1981 and was sponsored by the Labour Council of Metropolitan Toronto and the Centre for Labour Studies at Humber College. The guest speakers in attendance were Paul Brodner, writer for the New Yorker magazine; Jeanne M. Stellman, Executive Director of the Women's Occupational Health Resource Centre; Mary Sue Henifin, Visiting Assistant Professor in the School of Natural Science at Hampshire College, Amherst, Mass.; and Rosalie Bertell, Energy and Public Health Specialist with the Jesuit Centre for Social Faith and Justice, Toronto.

The key areas of concern to VDT users as discussed by the speakers are stress, ergonomics, eye strain and radiation.

The radiation emitted from a VDT must be below the standards set by federal governments around the world, but no one knows the effects of long term, low level radiation doses. Some recommendations from the conference speakers and various texts for users of display terminals are shorter periods at the terminals, no longer than 2 hours at one time, and no more than 4 hours a day. Terminals should be placed throughout the work area rather than clumped together as the radiation level increases with the number of terminals. Workers over the age of 45 should not be allowed to use VDTs because of a suspected link to cataracts. Regular checks to the machines' hardware should be performed as well as yearly radiation testing to ensure the levels are below the standard.

Eye strain is the biggest and most common complaint of VDT users. This can be caused by improper lighting, glare, incorrect

positioning of work stations near windows, flicker effects of screen characters, and extended hours at the screen. VDT users should take a break away from their work stations where they can let their eyes view something at a great distance for a change.

The ergonomics of the VDT work station are very important because of the limits a VDT places on its user. The table, chair, and video display terminal itself should be adjustable. The table should be large enough to hold the terminal, keyboard, a telephone (for dial-up systems), a document holder, and have enough room left over to hold papers, books, etc. The chair should be easily adjusted while the worker is sitting in it. The terminal should have a control knob for the brightness of the characters, and should be able to tilt to different angles to adjust to each individual worker.

Most advertisements for video display terminals or computers of any kind emphasize increased productivity. When these machines are introduced into the work environment, everyone expects the job to be done much quicker at a lower cost. This puts stress on the user which can also be aggravated by eye strain, fatigue, and various other human factors. Many employees also are under stress because there is the threat of one day being replaced by a computer.

The video display terminal is here to stay. They are in our work places, and will be in our homes in the near future with the arrival of video games, etc. These machines can be made safely, but most people are unaware of the potential dangers. The first step is educating users, the next step is ensuring manufacturers produce an absolutely safe machine.

For further reading:

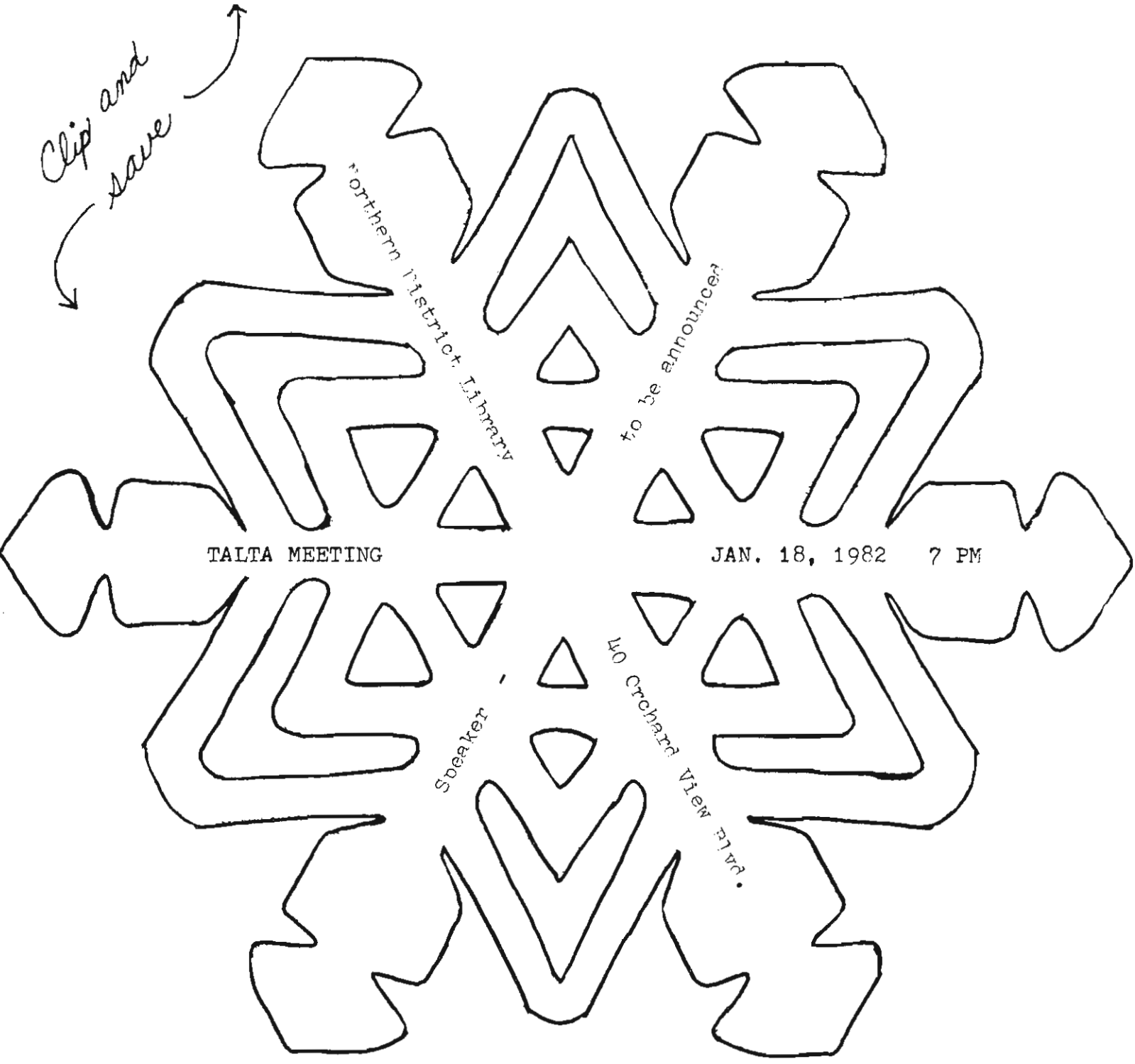
1. VDT manual. Cakir, Hart & Stewart.
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