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# TALTA

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## NEW EXECUTIVE

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Views expressed in this newsletter are those of the individual contributors, and do not necessarily reflect those of the Ontario Association of Library Technicians/Association des Bibliothéchniciens de l'Ontario.

## TALTA EXECUTIVE 1987-1988

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**HAVE A GREAT SUMMER, WATCH YOUR MAIL FOR SUMMERTIME TOURS**

**Mary-Alice White** (979-2870) has been a member of TALTA for a few years. She has been the director of the In-Touch Committee for 1987-1988. She is also an active member of TALL and is on the Pay Equity Committee for Ontario Government Library Council 1987-1988. Being a 1980 graduate from Algonquin College, she is working successfully in the Ministry of Government Services, Information Resource Centre.

I am - there I think my name is **Linda Yarema** (it's Slavic). I'm looking forward to being your new editor. I am a graduate from Technician's school at Sheridan College when they still had a medical option - which I took and I've worked in Medical libraries since 1980 (about 8 years). I've been a member of TALTA for a number of years and recently worked on the In-Touch Committee with Mary-Alice. I'm looking forward to being your editor and I hope you'll send me lots of interesting newsletter input. If you don't, I'll have to make it all up and we don't want that, do we? Anything else you need to know feel free to call me at 597-3050.

Our new Secretary, **Gayle Ford**, brings us the experience of someone who has done this sort of thing before, because she has. Gayle was the TALTA secretary for 1985-1986. She enjoyed it so much she wanted to do it again. After graduating from Ryerson in 1979 Gayle began working at the Leonard Library of Wycliffe College, U of T. She hopes to offer TALTA great input in the year to come.

**TALTA EXECUTIVE ANNUAL REPORTS**

**PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT 1987/88**

Professionalism is a quality valued by individuals in all professions. It means taking a serious interest in one's chosen field and striving to develop one's expertise. We express dedication to our profession by joining associations such as TALTA. Belonging to an association helps us to affirm our common goals and ideals. It also provides a means of networking and professional development.

One of the goals set this past year was to promote continuing education for library technicians. This was accomplished by a series of workshops held by TALTA and Seneca College. In November TALTA sponsored a "Back-to-School" workshop which concentrated on helping technicians who were re-entering the work force, but it was also beneficial to technicians who were interested in learning new skills. Seneca College sponsored three workshops in February which concentrated on cataloguing, children's librarianship and supervisory skills. These workshops were valuable in broadening the scope of many technicians.

We all have our own roles to play in making TALTA thrive. Some of us have served on the Executive and some have been active on committees. The majority of us attended the meetings and workshops which made all the planning worthwhile. There were three committees formed the 1987-88 year. The Salary Survey Committee, headed by Alicia Friese, presented their results in September 1987. It was one of the most comprehensive salary surveys produced by TALTA. Mary-Alice White organized the "In-Touch Committee" and submitted some pertinent suggestions in redefining the role and function of the committee. The TALTA Membership Directory Committee's

efforts were well rewarded by the production of a compact and streamlined directory. Many thanks to Grace Lofters, Mary-Alice White, Kelly Walsh and Janet Dunbar for their dedication in doing the task well.

1987 was a breakthrough year for Library Technicians and TALTA members. Seneca College selected Sally Clark-Mills as a TALTA representative to sit on the Seneca College Technical Advisory Committee. It is the first time a Library Technician has been allowed to join the Committee. This is one step towards the acknowledgement that Library Technicians are individuals who want to have control in the development of their profession.

The CLA Task Force on the Role of Librarians and Library Technicians was formed in 1985 to provide a clear definition of the tasks and roles of each profession. TALTA members were given an update of the progress the Task Force was making by Mary Lloyd at the Christmas Get-together. Members were asked to submit their opinions and concerns regarding the Task Force's findings. Our views were voiced in OALT/ABO's response to the CLA Task Force Report.

The devotion of time and effort by my Executive members made it possible for TALTA to successfully complete another productive year. I am grateful to all of you for your support and encouragement throughout the past year. The coming year promises to be even better as we learn to pull together in achieving our goals.

*Catherine Honkawa  
President*

**VICE-PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT - 87/88**

I began the year with a mandate to provide programming for TALTA members which would introduce new technology and review the technical skills a technician is expected to have, look at concerns we as technicians in the information industry have, and skills or issues which are of general interest. Within the 7 meetings held this year, we have addressed all these topics. The year's programs were as follows:

- September      Stress Management
- October        Library Automation and the Technician
- November      "Back to School" refresher sessions on basic skills - ILL, acquisitions, reference work.
- December      Social evening with a presentation on the CLA Task Force on the Role of the Technician.
- January        Technicians meet technicians panel
- February       Skills analysis for job searches
- March          Annual business meeting with presentation on business etiquette.
- May / June     Tours

I would like to thank the others on the executive for all the assistance and advice given in preparing the program for the year. I would also like to thank the TALTA members who participated in our meeting; together you have helped to make 1987/88 a successful year.

*Kathryn Kern*

tion, for example, satisfy the necessary criteria but the public library does not. To White, charging adults and businesses a fee for basic library services would seem to be a possible answer to the libraries' financial problems.

Some libraries have long been charging for special services: borrowing current best sellers, film rentals, interlibrary-loans, reservations, equipment rentals or photocopying. A few libraries in the United States offer business reference information research for a fee. But no public library has ever required payment for basic services: lending books and providing reference assistance to non business patrons.

White does not regard the public library's role as "a people's university" an important one. He says that our society values certification and that education with nothing to show for it requires more self-motivation than most people can muster.

There is a discrepancy between the social justification which has been the library creed and the actual use made of libraries which consists largely of the delivery of recreational reading to the middle class. White states that,

"The available evidence has consistently shown that the public library's clientele is predominantly middle and upper-middle income and white collar."<sup>6</sup>

THESE RESULTS ARE CONFIRMED IN *Project Progress's Report of Canadian Libraries*<sup>7</sup> and in *The Library Journal*, January 1979 issue.<sup>8</sup>

The following economic argument appears to have some merit:

Surely there is something unfair about taxing an entire populace to support a service used by only 20% - 40%, especially when most of those who do use libraries are economically capable of paying a fee. The benefit received principle suggests that it would be both more equitable and more efficient to install marginal cost pricing and let the services support themselves.<sup>9</sup>

White agrees that one function justifies the public library's claim on the taxpayer's money is the education of children.

White recommends charging an annual membership fee of five dollars for individuals and ten dollars for families and lending books at five or six cents a day. His solution includes the continuation of government subsidies to supplement lower fees for students and children and free service for the poor and aged. He believes that users who do not consider library books a good rental at forty-two cents a week may be assumed to be either wealthy enough to purchase their own books or lacking in motivation to read.

Another example of library fee charge is that recently put into effect in Baltimore County Library:

This library imposed new and heavier fees in order to balance its budget and maintain basic library services. A \$10.00 fee is charged for public use of branch meeting rooms. The video cassette program urges \$2.00 donations per loan. This donation is tax deductible. A 25¢ charge is made for an inter library loan and a 50¢ service charge for processing lost books. Fines have gone up from 10 to 11¢ and the fee for book reservations has been doubled to 50¢. Children and senior citizens will remain exempt from the reserve fee.<sup>10</sup>

According to White the benefits derived from such a charge could be many:

Borrowers would acquire an incentive to return books promptly. Book availability would improve, encouraging greater use....A relatively small number of people might stop borrowing but a relatively large number of poor people would cease to finance, through sales and property taxes, services from which they and never derived much benefit.

Confusion and hypocrisy about the library's educational function would diminish, too. Service to students and children would receive direct government support; service for business, personal or recreational purposes would by and large pay for itself. Librarians might become more responsive to students and children and not give their requests short shrift, if they were the specific justification for public subsidy.<sup>11</sup>

In addition, White believes that charging fees would enhance the public library's ability to develop new innovative services. It would be worth attempting in the library setting any innovation that promised to generate enough revenues to cover the cost. Mr. White thinks it is possible that fees would attract more users. The notion that free goods are not worth very much has discouraged some people from using the library services. People value services they have to directly pay for more than they value free service. In summary Mr. White believes that a free system may be a way of salvaging the public library and even of improving it.

White is not alone in his conviction. According to Marilyn Killebrew Gell in *The Library Journal* 1979,

Use of user fees to finance selected services will lead to neither to the salvation of the public library nor to its demise. Public pricing is economically viable, socially sound way to expand some services and improve others. It should be used, however, only to supplement support from general tax revenue, not to supplant it.<sup>12</sup>

On-line data base service is one area where many see a charge for individual service being necessary. The public library community is only now beginning to face the for free question for on-line data base services. These on-line services are having a profound impact on the philosophy of library information reference service.

Several questions remain to be debated and resolved. Should there be a cost for on-line service? What cost elements should be included in the fees? Should there be a disparity between the charges for on-line search and those for other reference services and should fee schedules be the same for all classes of users?

Fay M. Blake in *Library Journal* states that

Once library administrators begin to sell services to those who can afford them, it's only a short step to seeking out paying customers. There will inevitably be more paying customers in the business community than among other sectors of the population so business users are encouraged. Acquisition of materials begins to get tailored to their needs....and staff training begins to be shaped to suit the business users' patterns.<sup>13</sup>

In other words, users' fees will lure the private data base companies to produce what those customers who can afford the cost want. But the social benefits of education will have been totally disregarded.

Another argument against charging for data-base reference service in a library is that the first individual could not be expected to pay for all the others who could use the same information.

It would make more sense for the library to provide for its costs collectively. Libraries paying for such services together could exert their much more effective collective consumer power to required accountability from the private information services.

The problem of rising costs of library services is not a simple one and there are no simple immediate solutions. All proposals need extensive discussion and study by the library profession. It is certain that libraries will need to engage in the not so genteel political process and to insist that their library organizations become effective political agents in order to prevent the demise of the important concept of free public libraries. The library community and the public must convince public policy-makers that library services are worthy of public support and that their benefits accrue to society as a whole.

In the short run fees would allow libraries to offer new technologies but in the long run imposing fees may force public libraries to contradict the very purpose for which they exist - to provide service which is in the public interest on an equal basis to all.

**Footnotes and Bibliography supplied on request**



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