

## MIDDLE PERSON'S DESK

**James W. Pollock**

*(James W. Pollock is Librarian and Cataloger for Near East Studies, IUB)*

*Editor's note: This paper was originally prepared for reading at the Annual Meeting of the Middle East Librarians Association, November 28, 1984, San Francisco, California*

"Here comes our specialist on the Middle East now. You'll surely get the information you need!" What happens to you as librarian when you see, overhear and approach that situation? Do you change your gait or posture? How about your expression? Your librarian's MC (mental computer) is casting about for the right role-model to flash on the screen. This search is a reflex process, and also a necessary one. Experts about to be interviewed on television find themselves in the same position when their names and credentials are read out. A smile breaks out, or an eye flickers with aloof glassiness. Upon entering the situation your functioning role-model must be adjusted to the library patron's role-model-expectation of you. You may have to change the patron's expectation if too much of a free handout is demanded. Does this narrative so far ring a bell within your memory, or is it so much ding-dong talk with the wires disconnected at this end?

I hope you will agree with me on *The Importance of a Role-Model*. "Role-model" is a more active phrase to use, I believe, than "image", or even "working image". A librarian's mind is fully active when a reference question is input. The barest of stages for interaction begins with a one-on-one encounter. The associative context of every word the patron uses is rapidly filled in from your MC's random access memory. Some of that verbal furniture brought onto your one-on-one stage is necessarily censored, deleted or prioritized away from your immediate working space. In that working space, or frame of reference, you have your own informed mind and external tools of bibliography and reference, together with the patron's mental experience and working data.

I believe it is important to study and use role-model metaphors in our library work at this point. They clarify the librarian's own self understanding as being in a role to begin with. We are Middle Persons for public service, in the middle between an Eastern subject area of study and a Western civilization, or, between an Eastern citizen and a Western library format of knowledge. Whatever our library title may be, it is the public that looms large in our mind and before our desk. This public provides our patrons and our patronage.



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# NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

**Kristine Brancolini**

*(Kristine Brancolini is Head, Media Services Department, IUB)*

This is my last issue as editor of the *InULA Innuendo*, although I will remain active in InULA as Secretary this year. Over the past six issues, the Publications Committee and I have tried to continue the themes, high standards, and enthusiasm of the 1983-84 Committee, which inaugurated the *Innuendo*. Carla Montori, Preservation Librarian, has agreed to chair the Publications Committee and edit the *Innuendo* during 1985-86. For those of you who do not know Carla, she was the subject of an "InULA People" column in the February 1985 issue of the *Innuendo*.

Each member of the 1984-85 Publications Committee made a significant contribution to the publication of the *Innuendo*. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their hard work: Julie Bobay, Wendell Johnting, Anne Rimmer, Pamela Sandstrom, Marilyn Shaver, and Pat Steele. I would also like to acknowledge Glenn Read's special contribution. Although not an official member of the Publications Committee, Glenn shot and developed photographs for several issues. His photos added immeasurably to the aesthetic appeal of the *Innuendo*.

In this issue's feature article, Jim Pollock provides a humorous glimpse into the world of the area specialist. As a Middle East specialist, particularly, Jim explores his position as a "Middle Person," linking an Eastern area of study and a Western library. Originally prepared for the Annual Meeting of the Middle East Librarians Association last fall, perhaps Jim's article will stimulate thinking about our own roles as librarians.

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# InULA People

## **Marilyn Shaver**

Nancy Schmidt has been the African Studies area and subject librarian for the I.U. Libraries since October, 1984. Before coming to Indiana, she spent seven years as head of Harvard's Tozzer Library, an anthropology library. In spite of a long-standing interest in Africa she had not had the chance to travel there until recently. Her opportunity came in August of this year when she spent three weeks in Zimbabwe, Malawi, and Kenya buying books for the library, setting up exchanges, improving existing exchanges, and publicizing I.U.'s African Studies Library Assistantship. This assistantship is of particular interest to Nancy because she held that position herself in 1970-71 as an MLS student at Indiana University. The only assistantship of its kind in the United States, it has been occupied by only one African since its inception in 1965. It has been decided that in the future only African candidates will be considered for that post, and it was felt that direct contact with African libraries and educational institutions would be the best way to let prospective applicants know about the assistantship.

During Nancy's stay in Africa she visited Harare, the capital of Zimbabwe; Zomba and Lilongwe, the old and new capitals of Malawi, and Nairobi, the capital of Kenya. She went to government offices and publishers, museums, bookstores, universities, libraries, and the national archives of all three countries. She carried with her slips for unfilled and cancelled orders and was able to fill about 50 of them. She also purchased over 500 titles, including serials and government publications.

Obviously, with this kind of schedule, Nancy had little free time, however, she was able to take side trips to the Rift Valley in Kenya and Nairobi Park, where she took a bumpy ride through the wildlife preserve. She also took a rainy "dry-season" drive on the scenic Malawi plateau. Most of the food served in the places that she stayed (hotels and government rest house) was totally British. Only in Kenya did she find native food available in public eating places, and even there the food was usually British prepared in Kenyan fashion.

Nancy's over-all impression was of friendly and cooperative people. She felt that her background in African Studies had fostered an attitude on her part that was extremely helpful in her ability to adjust to the countries and people that she visited. She walked all over the cities that she stayed in and encountered few problems. She's looking forward to a return trip to Harare in August, 1986, when she will participate in a symposium on African children's literature connected with the Zimbabwe Book Fair.



**Nancy Schmidt**

# MIDDLE PERSON'S DESK Continued

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The public service encounter between librarian and an anxious, bored or curious patron can be satisfactory and stimulating, or it can be depressing and even destructive. Some encounters begin more as a crashing collision than as a scholarly dialogue. Have you ever dealt with an anxious and angry professor or administrator or colleague who can talk faster than you can? Here we have use for metaphors such as heavy-duty shock absorbers, or, the European-type spring bumpers between railroad cars and on the engine in the hitching and moving procedure. I think also of the crash tests of automobile bumpers at varying speeds demonstrating the virtue of low damage reports in television ads. After your anxious patron has delivered the message, do you look on yourself as the dummy in the seat—limp and speechless, or as the tester who says audibly "All right, now let's try that again at half the speed," or words to that effect?

The use of role-models can highlight the librarian's viewpoint along with the whole context of information transfer. As a result, the information is effectively apprehended, and the encounter at your library's public service point may be an open-ended teaching-learning experience that promotes interest and understanding for both parties. Whatever role-model is nearest your consciousness then will generate an appropriate degree of satisfaction, whether or not your work becomes a statistic in the annual report

When and how do we proceed in *Building Efficient Role-Models*? For this step I wish I could display for you a motion-picture from my random access memory entitled "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty." It starred Danny Kaye, and came out around 1950. Walter was a gifted day-dreamer with himself enacting dangerous and heroic roles, while in daily life he was an ungifted common man. My memory has lost part of the movie, and so I don't know whether it was his passage into age 50 that spurred Walter's imaginative powers or it was a constant genius with him.

On two earlier Middle East Librarians Association programs we have discussed role-model metaphors that have a suggestive usefulness for work in area studies librarianship. Yes indeed, we were fiftyish then, and the capacity to dream was growing into a near-vice. If it weren't for curious library patrons, administrators and colleagues it would truly be out of hand

The area librarian may be a *referee* (or, *umpire*—depending on what season of the year it is) in making a balance with dynamic tension between the demands of the library community and the rightful needs of the library collection. You may need a helmet and body protection pads to meet the well-nigh physical onslaughts of interest groups or jet-propelled egos presenting their demands. The referee should look down at the floor and mentally pace off yardage of penalty then look up to stare at the culprits, while genially speaking to them of the library's budgetary limitation and your careful distribution of funds among the vernacular studies. If the aggression continues, it would be salutary to introduce among your conversational gestures the signals for shoving and hacking, and don't forget the accusing index finger. Farewells after such conversations should be by upraising the left hand and extending the five fingers with an ambiguous smile. There are times when one's gait and posture must be that of the wary referee, on and off the field

Now of course the truth is that by far most of the public service encounters that involve a balance between library community wants and the welfare of the collection are friendly encounters in which each side of the balance is benefited. A patron is introduced with pleasure to a little-used part of the collection. The librarian gladly invests to obtain a useful new research tool announced by a friend or by printed information. Linguistic preferences aside, the librarian can share a basic human enthusiasm for a patron's interest in philology, history, religion or any other discipline. Supporting such interest with a good collection is our profession.



The area librarian may be an electronically imprinted *film*—either tape or disk will do—that holds and presents the record of bibliographic history. By the nature of our profession we accumulate memories that list useful bibliographic tools. These have become old friends to us, but they are new discoveries to beginning researchers. We once had a bumptious young Near Eastern scholar who tended to shun librarians since he was a native speaker and therefore had already fenced-in the ocean of knowledge. A serious term paper assignment, however, had penetrated to his "Empty Quarter", and so one day he came wondering where he should begin. The basic information sources were strange to him, so we told him to take paper and pencil and write down the titles, then get the call numbers and begin reading on his subject. As we called off the names of standard encyclopedias, dictionaries, indexes and bibliographies, he suddenly dropped his jaw open and half-grinned in amazement and some shock. The road ahead was to be longer than he knew. No simple handy book on his topic existed!

Conversely, it is only by dint of long practice during waking hours that this librarian has been able to keep his jaw from dropping open in amazement on learning from young colleagues about the working potential of their computers. They have tamed them and have used them to produce fine bibliographies now in print and serving research needs in many countries. We area librarians must become more aware of and able to access a variety of data bases for public service work as well as for personal research. The role-model of the electronically imprinted film is greatly amplified by patient study of new information-sharing methods and the instruments that make these links and print out what is needed.

The area librarian may be a *curtain* to expand and facilitate perception by researchers of their field of study. In this showing-and-telling procedure it helps if one is slightly adulterated with ham and is willing to let the drama unfold as your patron mentally beholds the multi-dimensional and sparkling research perspectives in this great trans-cultural subject field.

Perish the librarian who is unaware of natural beauty in patrons and the story of their origins! A young person with a name only slightly anglicized came for leads to write on the possible correlation between two ethnic facets of her heritage. Naturally the trained librarian first referred her to specialists in those fields! Then we inquired as to possible items or collections of literature from Araby that might exist in her nearby community of second and third generation immigrant families. This bibliographic appeal stirred some curiosity and interest in familiar scenes at home—so often thought of as commonplace and not of research value. Let us hope for other such encounters and some discoveries.

A *Reflective Evaluation of Middle Person's Desk* as a library public service point will be made by the Association of Research Libraries with unsleeping regularity. How many questions did you have? How many were really significant? Where were you when they were posed? Why? And so on. Middle Person's "desk" is really a mobile peripatetic seance, more like the small folding seat on a sportsman's cane, very pathetic as a writing surface or a phone-answring service. Our position as Middle Person can use many illuminating metaphors as role-models. Those herein discussed are suggestive only. Each area librarian's perception will discover others that are both useful and special.

The use of role-model metaphors in teaching and purposeful conversation and writing is a very old tradition among us People of the Book. There was old Shaykh Ayyūb whom you know as Job, in South Arabia, he who was "blameless and upright," who fell on evil days when he lost his fortune, his children, his health and everything good that he had, except his sometimes good wife. He had a theological problem and he didn't have the answer. He

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# MIDDLE PERSON'S DESK Continued

wished aloud that there might be an arbiter, or *umpire*, between him and the Almighty (Job 9:33) to adjust and reconcile their different role-model expectations of each other. Here is the picture of the Middle Eastern *muṣāliḥ* or *wasīṭ* who mediates the differences between two worthy persons who ought to be reconciled friends. Middle Person may be the academic *Wasīṭ* between civilizations.

In Surat al-Baqarah, Sura 2, verse 142, the followers of the Prophet Muhammad are given a divine role-model as their reason for being "Ka-dhālika ja'alnākum *ummatan wasaṭan* li-takūnū shuhadā'a 'alā al-nās" (We have made you to be a *mediating nation* in order to be witnesses to mankind) I think that sometimes this central phrase is thought of and translated as Middle Nation, and the *purpose* of its role is omitted from the discussion. And in Old Testament literature the concept of the Chosen People is similar in having a divine purpose of service to the world. Similarly, to this day, the purpose is mostly deleted from common perception, thus leaving the role-model incomplete. Coming in the Old Testament tradition there was a famous person who used role-model metaphors in teaching and conversation. In a choice-and-decision situation he would say "I am this!" And each time he used a metaphor well understood by those listening. These communications have been remembered both in method and in reference content.

The Middle Person's Desk will continue to exist in our research libraries in order to link Middle Eastern culture—as it really is—with Western culture at every communication level and mode that is open. Our aim in holding down Middle Person's Desk is to bring about in every encounter satisfaction for these two different parties or viewpoints in a mutual process of expanding and developing a sympathetic consciousness. The Desk serves any interested world citizen, be that one a student—enrolled or not, teaching faculty from the West or teaching faculty from the East, or yet even a research-minded librarian.

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## NOTES FROM InULA

### Joanne Bailey, President

InULA is beginning its sixteenth year with a number of exciting, interesting, and worthwhile activities on the agenda. The Executive Board continues to place a high priority on the publication of the *InULA Innuendo*, which serves as a forum for discussion of current issues in addition to enabling InULA to be a more effective system-wide organization. InULA will continue to sponsor and support continuing education and library programs and to plan the booksale and special events which occur during National Library Week. We are looking forward to the Second Annual InULA Auction, and one of the first items the Executive Board will consider this fall will be procedures for the allocation of auction proceeds to support InULA member research projects.

This year's recipient of the InULA scholarship is

SLIS student Rebecca Beck. She earned a B.A. in music from the University of Georgia, has had extensive work experience at the University of Georgia, and is now in the music library specialization program. Congratulations Rebecca!

It gives me great pleasure to announce InULA's committee chairs for 1985-86. If you are interested in serving on any of these committees, please contact the appropriate chairperson. We welcome your participation and suggestions.

Constitution — Nels Gunderson  
Continuing Education — Lou Malcomb  
National Library Week Booksale —  
Julie Bobay and Emily Okada  
Publications — Carla Montori  
Social & Program — Rich Paustenbaugh

# InULA MEMBERSHIP FORM

**Regular membership** is available to any person who holds a library faculty appointment on any campus of Indiana University

**Associate membership** is available to all other librarians, SLIS faculty, and library science students who are interested in supporting the purpose of the organization

New librarians who have been appointed after May 1 are offered free membership their first year. Please return this form, to claim your complimentary membership

## Committees

Continuing Education — sponsors a workshop each year

National Library Week (Books) — co-ordinates the annual book sale

National Library Week (Events) — plans and co-ordinates events

Program and Social — plans the programs and social activities of InULA, such as the annual auction

Publications — edits and publishes the *InULA Innuendo*, a bi-monthly publication

Constitution and By-Laws — reviews the constitution and by-laws as necessary

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Please enroll me as a

Regular member	\$3 00	( )
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Dues cover the period from October 3 of this year to October 2 of next year

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Library address \_\_\_\_\_

Status (Library faculty, teaching faculty, student, etc ) \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (indicate office or home) \_\_\_\_\_

Please check committee interests. They will be forwarded to committee chairs.

Continuing Education	( )	
National Library Week Book Sale	( )	Mail check and form to
National Library Week Events	( )	
Program and Social	( )	Marilyn Shaver
Publications	( )	Catalog Department
Constitution and By-Laws	( )	Main Library E350
Any non-standing ad-hoc committee	( )	IUB

# BOOKS, ETC.

## CRIME IN THE LIBRARY— CURSE IT!

**Pat Steele**

*SLIS Library*

The recent number of new books devoted to library security could make one wonder about the state of book theft, mutilation and general mischief in the nation's libraries. As illustrated by the medieval chaining of books to tables, security has been a continuing library problem. According to Thomas W. Shaughnessy's article in *Security for Libraries* (edited by Marvin Brand; Chicago: ALA, 1984) increased library security problems were reflected in a 385% increase in articles on library security during the decade of the 1960's, followed by a further 156% increase in the 1970's. The 1980's continue this trend.

Of these numerous works, the single most significant one, which was devoted to a discussion of book theft, has been "Notes on Bibliokleptomaniomania" by Lawrence S. Thompson (*New York Public Library Bulletin* 48: 723-60, Sept. 1944). It was updated in 1975 (Lawrence S. Thompson, "New Reflections on Bibliokleptomaniomania," *Library Security Newsletter* 1:8-9, Jan. 1975). Over the decades the emphasis of articles on library security has broadened beyond theft to presently include the security of data and files and the personal safety of library employees and users. *Crime in the Library—A Study of Patterns, Impact, and Security* by Alan Jay Lincoln (New York: Bowker, 1984) is representative of this expanded view. The author focuses on four major types of problems: crimes of theft, vandalism, personal assault and problem patron behavior, placing them in perspective regarding national crime patterns, the cost of such crimes to the institution, risk factors and suggested ways to reduce crime risk in the library setting.

The quirkier aspects of some library users are described via case studies by Bruce Shuman in *River Bend Revisited: The Problem Patron in the Library* (Phoenix, Ar.: Oryx Press, 1984). A 1984 spec kit from ARL describes efforts directed toward collection security by a number of academic libraries (Washington, D.C.: Association of Research Libraries, Office of Management Studies, 1984). *Library & Archival Security* devoted an issue (vol 5 no.2/3, 1983) to an extensive international bibliography by Martin H. Sable on the protection of libraries and archives. Mr. Sable's work is confined to discussion of the protection of buildings and collections with issues ranging from materials mutilation to floods and earthquakes.

It is obvious from this short review that crime in the library has been and continues to be a problem for libraries, which has generated a sizeable literature. If help is not found in that literature, perhaps resorting to the medieval book curse would prove beneficial. According to Lawrence S. Thompson in "The biblioklept curses" (*Library Security Newsletter* vol 1, no.6, Nov/Dec. 1975), the book curse has antiquity and durability over two millennia in its favor. So remember.

Si quisquis furetur  
this little libellum  
Per Bacchum, per Joven!  
I'll kill him, I'll fell him.  
In ventem illius  
I'll stick my scalpellum  
And teach him to steal  
My little libellum.

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