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## You Gotta Go to School for That?

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In the 1970s Cleveland was perceived by some as a rough town and coincidentally a librarian was mugged and robbed outside the convention hotel Sunday night during the Conference. (Please, no cards or letters from the good folks of Cleveland.) I like the city and fortunately the victim was OK.

Unfortunately, I looked like the vic-

tim during the conference, as my eyes were turning variations of blue and purple and black. People would come to the exhibit booth and say . . . "We're sorry you were robbed." "Are you all right?" "How did it happen?"

Needless to say it was difficult to conduct business those few days. Dur-

ing the flight home, the boss reminded me that I got paid for selling journals and not playing hockey! The End.

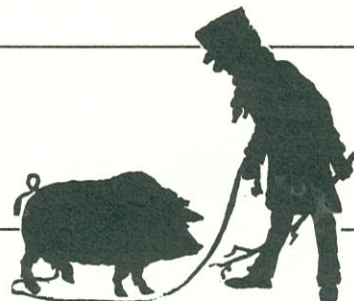
I hope to have a lot of great submissions for the next issue! So come on Jim and tell us about the time you were locked in a library; or Roy, tell us about the infamous booth set up in the men's room.☹

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## You Gotta Go to School for That?

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by **Jerry Seay** (Rookie Informationalist, College of Charleston Libraries)



Li-brary: (from Latin *librarius* meaning of books). A place in which literary, musical, artistic or reference materials are kept for use but not for sale. (Paraphrased from Webster's *New Collegiate Dictionary*)

Li-brar-i-an: (from pig latin *ibrarianla* meaning *little old lady with hair in bun*).

1. A person trained in the art of making people be quiet by manipulating blasts of air through lips and forefinger creating a shushing sound. 2. A person who checks out, reads, stamps or otherwise manipulates or fondles books all day long esp. if s/he wears sensible shoes.

When people ask me what I do, lately I avoid the "L-word" like the black plague (if another person asks me how many books I checked out to people or how many times I say Shhhhh a day I think I will run them down with a booktruck). I tell them I work at the library as a greeter. "Welcome to the library. Today we have a special in reference: two questions for the answer of one. Would you like a buggy?"

Okay, so the only thing worse than being a librarian is being called one. That's what my brother says. Anyway, what does he know? He is a welder. But at least I can tell what he does by his title. What do welders do? They weld. What do librarians do? Lib? Gee, of course not. Librarians sit at desks all day reading proper novels, playing with the card catalog, and giving directions to the magazine rack. Everybody knows that. At least that is what most folks outside of library land think we do.

Why are we as a profession still stuck

with a 19th century stereotype of how we look and what we do? Computer programmers are stereotyped as "nerds" with pocket protectors, but at least people have a good idea of what they do. We do not sit on books all day waiting for someone to ask to borrow them. Our business is information. We manipulate, communicate, disseminate, and navigate through databases, along electronic highways, around the world and into cyberspace. We acquire, order, catalog, search, investigate and massage information. We are the "info elite." We are not the guardians of the books. We are the navigators of the information universe.

Okay, so we know this. How do we make the rest of the known world know what an important part of society we are, without whom modern civilization would collapse? For starters let's do something about that "L word." The word "librarian" does not evoke images of high tech, highly trained attractive professionals cruising through cyberspace. The word actually brings to mind images of bun-bedecked little old ladies riding shelf ladders past rows of encyclopedias of ancient history. The "L-word" is not a great descriptive word for what we are and what we do today. It is like calling a computer programmer a typist.

So, what to call us? I kind of like "exalted info pro." The following is a list of possible name changes for practitioners of our noble profession:

1. Information manager: it says what we do and has the "I" word. It sounds so corporate too.
2. Information specialist: has the "I" word but tends to suggest a more technical image.

3. Information scientist: impressive and sexy. There's that "I" word again. Maybe a bit too research-sounding.
4. Info overlord: abbreviated "I" word. Title suggests majesty and mystery. Would gain respect from the peasants for sure.
5. Multimedia madam.: allows inclusion of various media formats. However, may evoke images of services we are unprepared to fulfill.
6. MAX (acronym for Media Access Expediter): short and sweet. Covers all media. A very anti-weenie name. Tendency to differentiate female practitioners by the title Maxine, however, should be avoided.
7. Infomaniac: Abbreviated "I" word. Gives some sense of the enthusiasm we bring to the job.
8. Information or info navigator: good descriptive action word for what we do. Sounds adventurous too.
9. Informationalist: One good word that happens to be the "I" word. Seems to cover all bases.

Granted, some of these names may be more practical than others. There may even be better names out there. But, it is time we threw away the hair buns and shushing and the "L" word. I don't know how to do this exactly. I think I'll just start telling folks that I am an informationalist. I can hear the response now: "Oh, an informationalist? Now, what kind of church is that?" ☹