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Op-Ed — Opinions and Editorials

The Negatives in Librarianship

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I enjoyed reading **Jack Montgomery's** "Op-Ed" column in the November 1994 issue of *Against the Grain*, and wrote Katina to say so. Her response was to ask me to write an "Op-Ed" also.

Let's face it. I like Jack's column because I agree with him. We are involved in an exciting and challenging profession, but it is up to us to make it so. Unfortunately, many of us spend too much time fretting about our image, complaining about the pay, and trying to fit our profession into the mold presented by medicine and the law. Our time and energy could be better spent on finding better ways to do our jobs.

The unflattering stereotype of librarians continues to exist. The jokes people make when they find out I am a librarian are hard to take. Do we not have enough respect for ourselves to be comfortable in our chosen profession regardless of what the rest of the world thinks of it?

No one will become rich on a librarian's salary, but an MLS does pay for itself over time. As Jack points out, it is up to each one of us to decide how much money we need and then find a way to get it.

The debate over whether librarianship is a profession like law or medicine is similar to worrying about our image. What the world thinks is not as important as what we think.

Okay, so maybe we should not worry about our image, money, and professional status, but what about all this talk about the end of acquisitions departments? Many librarians say the word acquisitions is not in their title even though they are responsible for that function. Some libraries are reorganizing acquisitions out of existence. Will this process not become more common as outsourcing becomes the fashionable way to acquire materials? What will be the need for acquisitions departments at all once most everything is leased in an electronic format?

History tells us evolution is necessary for survival, and librarians evolve. Think about how things used to be done in acquisitions compared to how they are done now; the airmail stamp on rush orders to vendors compared to electronic ordering, typewriters and manual files versus data entry and electronic files, and double bibliographic searching first in acquisitions and then in cataloging rather than an electronic order

record acceptable for both functions. We are incorporating new ideas and new technologies into our work. Our job titles, and perhaps our places within our libraries are changing; but we are not gone. We continue to be involved in the process of providing information to library users.

We're working in libraries in a time of great challenge. Let's give up the negatives we can do nothing about and focus on how to continue evolving. We will all be happier and libraries will be more effective.

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