From Your (number-crunching) Editor

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I'll admit it here. I largely hate this time of year. I hate it because of income taxes, end of the holidays and beginning-of-the-year bills which get larger each year. Then right in the middle of running for ALA President, my LTA for accounting quit so I've been doing his full-time job on top of everything else. What to do? Well it's obvious.

I threw myself into what I love best — you guessed it — editing the February issue of Against the Grain. This issue is guest-edited by the tireless and astute Kent Mulliner and contains some really important papers by Pru Adler, Miriam Nisbet, Rick Anderson, Mike Bradley, Lolly Gasaway and Ward Shaw, regarding the Tasini Supreme Court decision. Karen Hunter also updates us on her continuing series of yearly articles about the state of the industry: Surviving Another Year. We have some new contributions by Daryl Rayner who has sent us Rumours (not a typo, just bowing to Brit-spell here) from Paddington plus an interview with Richard Charkin of Macmillan. We have an interview with Mike Eisenberg, Dean of the Information School, U. of Washington by Lisa Spagnolo plus a response re Tasini from LexisNexis Corporate Counsel, a profile of Scientist Professor Lali Chatterjee. Of course, there is much, much more! Meanwhile, reality calls! I have to go and pay more bills. At least Spring isn't far away. Yr. Ed.

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor:

Norman Desmarais (Against the Grain, v.13#6, Dec 01-Jan 02) raised some interesting questions about the allocation of spending for collection development. Unfortunately, his use of Allen Kent's "landmark study of library operations" casts a shadow over the formulas that he contemplates.

Kent argued for reducing collection development expenditures. He used circulation figures as the sole evidence of use of books and a very brief reading room observation to judge use of journals. The report was discredited by library researchers and publicly repudiated by the Pitt faculty senate. Melvin Voight of the University of California commented, "It seems so obvious that use of any multimillion-volume research library ... can be meaningfully studied only by concentrating on that research use, not on statistics hopelessly distorted by the intensive use of relatively few volumes by undergraduates." The Pittsburg study stands more as an eye sore than a landmark.

Circulation figures tell only about circulation. Many researchers (myself included) have used huge numbers of books in the stacks and reading rooms to record behavior demonstrated by patrons' activities. There is an urgent need for such research, particularly if it can connect with the consequences of use to estimate the productivity of libraries in eliminating wasteful errors, insularities, and duplications in research and education. The aim of library research in these worst of times should be to justify parity of library spending with R&D and education — not to waste energy competing for control of crumbs falling from the misers' table.

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References


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played the dead body! Norm says that Barbara was a little annoyed at the article because it mentioned that her character operated a brothel. Oops! But, you know what? I guess that's showbiz!

And, besides being in mysteries, Norm and Barbara are going to Paris for spring break in April. Lovely daughter, Denise, is studying in Paris this semester. Doesn't sound half bad to me. How about a French mystery?

Last Norm Rumor! Read all about it in Albert Henderson's letter to the editor in this issue (p.6). Norm says he'll let Albert's comments re his paper (did you read it? "In Search of Equitable Fund Distribution," Dec/Jan ATG, v.13#6, pp. 83-86) stand without comment. He says he continued on page 8