

To the Board of Trustees of Bennington College

Interim Report of the Librarian, Crossett Library

Spring, 1987

This past November the library achieved a status that has been most rare in recent years: full staffing. During the nine-month interregnum in which Peggie Partello served as Acting Director, the library crew successfully overcame the obstacles of limited resources and vacant and shifting staff positions to maintain a remarkably high level of service to the library community. With my arrival in October and two excellent hirings in technical services and for the secretarial position, the Crossett staff began immediately to demonstrate what it can accomplish at full strength; not only has day-to-day service been enhanced, but also a number of major projects have been successfully undertaken--not the least of which is the education of a new library director.

Public Services: We introduced a modest increase in library hours, in order that the library be available for use before the start of classes in the morning. A number of changes in circulation procedures have been introduced, principally to cut our losses in the periodical collection and to address the problem of damaged art books. So far the changes have been greeted for the most part with understanding and cooperation. Peggie Partello has made excellent progress in bringing order to the art slide collection, a very important, heavily used, but inherently troublesome portion of our holdings. Although the circulation of slides is working more smoothly than ever, we are faced with the necessity of replacing several hundred dollars' worth of missing items. We have also replaced many of our missing books, although on a necessarily limited scale.

New Shelving: Thanks to strong and timely support from the Dean's office, we were able to have the equivalent of three new ranges installed on the lower level during FWT. This was a very badly needed addition to our shelving capacity, but the grim likelihood is that this project, large as it was, necessitating the shift of a majority of the books in the library, will only buy us a year's worth of added space. Four times in the past five semesters, Margaret Wehrung has brought her high organizational abilities to bear upon the monumental task of moving the collections, assuring that their ordering remains coherent and sparing as much study space as possible. This is the most compelling evidence of our need for an additional building. We are also having shelving installed on the last available wall space on the upper level in order to accommodate the growth in our folio collection--another viable but only temporary solution.

Acquisitions: Marie Parker, our overseer of acquisitions, reports that orders are significantly ahead of last year in virtually every category. This is in part due to some major gifts, as well as to judicious use of sale catalogues. We are more actively soliciting requests from the faculty, with good results--and patience when we can't comply.

Technical Services: Cindy Mangsen and her assistant Leah Giblo have made major strides in the cataloging of an unusually large number of gift books, in the long-term project of reclassifying the Dewey Decimal collection, and in binding, as well as the day-to-day demands of processing new materials. Again thanks to the Dean, we are scheduled to receive the new M300 XT cataloging terminal from the OCLC network this summer, a necessary (and much more

powerful) replacement for our present model, soon to be phased out. Cindy also coordinated this year's book sale, a financial and public relations success that netted us over \$800, part of which has already gone toward a badly needed encyclopedia.

Periodicals: Laurie Figary has been engaged in the very considerable project of entering our journal holdings on the college computer. This will enable us to create multiple and easily-updated alphabetical and subject lists of our more-than-600 titles for the use of faculty and students. We plan to use the subject lists to engage the faculty in a general review of our periodicals collection late this semester.

Gifts: We have been extraordinarily fortunate this year in gifts to the library both in money and in kind. Outstanding among the former is the gift of the Trustees in memory of Jane Yarmolinsky. This most generous sum has been put to use in the acquisition of vitally needed reference works. Unique among the latter is the continuing generosity of Robert McHenry, whose Holiday Gift Campaign inspired alumni to give us over 200 books, many of them both expensive and appropriate to our needs. Mr. McHenry has also won us generous donors from the publishing world, and his signed authors campaign has brought us so far signed editions from over two dozen distinguished authors.

Prospects: We are encouraged by signs that we may have a small computer, badly needed for library circulation and word-processing purposes, before too long. We also live in hope of a new building to stand beside this magnificent but manifestly overburdened structure.

John Swan