

The following essay, entitled The Interrelationship of Community Responsibility and Individual Freedom With Specific Reference to Signing Out, was written at the request of the Judicial Committee by a student who has had a great deal of trouble with signing out this term. The Committee asked her to write this, to be distributed to the Community in a galley, in order to get her to think more about the overall responsibilities of signing out. We have been concerned about the number of sign-out errors and hope that the Community will take note of this so as to avoid similar Judicial action.

Lin Johnston, Chairman/Lisa Marshall/Kate Morgan/Loren Siegel/Sue Frary

We make the choice to live in a community because we have decided that there are certain positive values present in this situation which make it in our own best interests to accept its rules and restrictions. Since no one has imposed this choice upon us, but we have made it ourselves, it is futile to protest against it by not performing those tasks which this community has deemed important and necessary.

For the advantages gained from living in a certain community rather than as a separate entity, we relinquish certain rights and accept certain limits. The task of the community is to minimize the suffering and inconvenience of its members; hence each member's actions must be weighed not only with respect to the doer but also in conjunction with its effect on the other members of the community, and if its total effect is harmful, then the action becomes a relative evil. Likewise, an action which might seem unnecessary and inconvenient to one person but which simplifies and improves the overall functioning of the community becomes a valid one. This has become a basic precept of modern thought, whether approached objectively or subjectively: we must take others into account.

In making sign-out errors, one denies this essential aspect of the community. To accept the necessity and convenience of this precautionary measure is prerequisite to affirming one's responsibility to the community by supporting one's belief in its function and thus greatly diminishing the potential difficulties that one individual can cause. If a carelessness of attitude is allowed to pass unnoticed and a selfishness of action increased proportionately, the result would be markedly detrimental to the community as a whole. Signing out is a simple procedure which can hardly be considered bothersome and may conceivably be adopted as a habit. If one neglects the rules of signing-out, one immediately engages other people in annoying and unnecessary activity. The proper action is obvious; what is required is the discipline to enforce it, in order that the totality of the individual's liberty in relation to the community is preserved and maximized.