

## Libraries Do Not Need Resuscitation, Thank You!

by Harry Tuchmayer, column editor

Ok, so what if the millennium is just around the corner. There is still no need to bid farewell to a lovely institution.

Contrary to popular opinion, libraries are not in trouble. They are not irrelevant institutions bent on making life difficult for the average user. And as far as I know, there is absolutely no reason to hire Phillip Marlowe to investigate why "technology is rapidly eroding the public's reliance on libraries." Because, quite frankly, it's not!

I, for one, am tired of the constant predictions of our imminent demise. Those of you who know me know that I hate technology and constantly complain to anyone who will listen that computers will be the death of us all. But don't confuse these rambling's of a middle-aged librarian with an unwillingness to adapt and an inability to utilize the tools of a new age. It just is not so!

Libraries as institutions and librarians as individuals have adapted quit nicely to the technological revolution, and to suggest that basic changes have not occurred in the very nature of the services that we deliver and the assistance we provide is sheer nonsense.

Today, most librarians are well versed in the use of electronic resources, and there isn't a transaction that takes place in the library that doesn't somehow utilize the "fruits" of technological change. Everything from the card catalog to the index shelf has been replaced by the computer. To suggest that libraries in North Carolina (or anywhere else) lack the nerve or the wherewithal to "put our services where our platitudes are and give the customer what he wants when he wants it" is absurd.

Most libraries are already open seven day a week and most evenings until 9 P.M. In addition, libraries now provide dial-in access to the collection and other databases. How much more accessible do we have to be? I'm sorry if some insomniac may want a "we never close" concept of information services, but how reasonable is it to expect full library services at 3:00 A.M.?

Fundamental issues are, of course, at stake. We are faced with a rapidly changing world where people "believe" they need information NOW — regardless of its source or accuracy. We live in a world where society's expectations of services far exceed any individual's ability to provide those services, but we are unwilling to accept that as an excuse! Finally, we have created a world where nothing is constant except for change; yet we get angry and impatient with institutions that don't change fast enough.

What is remarkable is that, given all of this change, libraries continue to thrive. What is extraordinary is that, given the spread of individual access to information, libraries are more used and more relied upon than ever before to provide the public with information they need, when they need it. Yet most commendable of all is our belief that libraries can and should do more.

The truth of the matter is that not even the oldest library director has fallen asleep on the job. Nor has the most tradition-bound reference librarian failed to say goodbye to the printed periodical index. Nor as far as I know, have bibliophiles yet said their farewells to the library.

*... information seekers will certainly opt for the comfort and convenience of access unfettered by location and time of day.*

— Suzanne Wise

*... given the spread of individual access to information, libraries are more used and more relied upon than ever before ....*

— Harry Tuchmayer