

LIBRARIANS AT LIBERTY

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What Prisoners Aren't Allowed to Read and Why: A Minnesota librarian speaks out boldly against censorship in Hennepin County jails

HENNEPIN COUNTY LIBRARY Memo

DATE: July 25, 2000
TO: (deleted)
COPY: (deleted)
FROM: Keven Larson, OR
SUBJECT: ACF service concerns

As one who has been involved with library service to correctional facilities (the Adult Correctional Facility included) for a decade, I'm concerned about two recent developments in our service to ACF.

One concern is the limitation placed on ACF residents of only 3 requests per week. In the many years I have been making occasional visits to ACF, I have observed no change in the situation there that would justify such an extreme limitation. The demands on the service haven't varied to that great a degree in that time. And, since ACF residents are already severely limited in their access to library services, placing such additional limitations on this

Continued on page 4

EDITOR'S NOTE

Almost everything—indeed, every page except this one—in this issue of L@L has been transmitted in packets stuffed to bursting by Sanford Berman, the most remarkable librarian I have ever encountered in 33 years experience with the profession, and a fine human being.

L@L started publishing Sandy's writings three years ago ("Jackdaws Strut in Peacock's Feathers: the sham of 'standard' cataloging," June 1998, pp. 1, 4-21), while he was still Head Cataloger of the Hennepin (Minnesota) County Library.

A year later we devoted an entire Special Double Issue to him (June 1999, 36p.) and an enlarged 2nd edition (December 1999, 52p.)—"Sandy Berman's Forced Retirement from the Hennepin County Library: a series of documents, followed by letters of support and a petition on the Internet."

Last year L@L included "A Selection of Sandy's Recent Writings," Vol. 8:1-2 (Dec. 2000) 26-32:

- On Printism
- Cataloging out of the Box
- Hansen's Disease, not Leprosy
- Where Have All the "Berman Books" Gone?
A Series of Memoranda and Letters by
Sandy Berman, Part I

Continuing in this tradition, the current issue completes the "Berman Books" exchange, publishes his strong letter to ALA Executive Director William R. Gordon on free speech rights for librarians, and features a Special Section (pp. 13-25) about a project that Sandy has championed for more than a decade, "Implementing ALA's Poor People's Policy."

Also in this issue are letters from readers who encountered L@L through Sandy; a fine essay about him, "The Public Needs More Servants," by UCLA library school student Bruce Jensen; a poem for the San Francisco Public Library; and a series of memos by a former colleague at Hennepin, Keven Larson: "What Prisoners Aren't Allowed to Read and Why."

The next-to-last page gives two recent photos of Sandy and members of his family (he carved one of the jack-o-lanterns himself).

The back page is a flyer giving the text of the speech that Barbara Lee (Dem., Oakland, CA) made to the House of Representatives on 14 September 2001—the sole member of Congress to vote against the use-of-force resolution.

"As we act," Ms. Lee said, "let us not become the evil that we deplore."

Thanks, Sandy, and keep those packets coming!



Librarians at Liberty gives people working in libraries and related fields an unconstrained opportunity to express professional concerns. All letters and articles that critically examine library service are welcome, especially issues of race, class, gender and dissent in libraries everywhere. Efforts by publishers, distributors and individuals to market minority, controversial or alternative press titles to libraries are of interest, as is commentary about obstacles that libraries erect against such acquisitions. We promote the civic media sector—material of social concern not filtered by government or corporate censors. Similarly, we promote alternative libraries and infoshops free from government and corporate controls, worldwide. Please include name, street address, telephone, and e-mail address with correspondence.

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