

Circum-Spice

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Prof. Cesario

VIRGINIA CESARIO RETIRES

Prof. Virginia N. Cesario, Chief Librarian since 1976, has retired after a career of 33 years at City College Library. Prof. Margaret E. Kenny, Assistant Chief Librarian for Technical Services, has accepted the appointment of Acting Chief Librarian.

The following is a tribute to Prof. Cesario by her predecessor, Dr. Bernard Kreissman, now University Librarian at The University of California at Davis:

When I returned to the City College as Chief Librarian in 1962 there were one or two individuals I dimly recalled from my former student years, but for the most part the staff was a sea of faces with names attached. Over the course of long months the names began to sort themselves out and the personal characteristics to assert themselves. Only naturally, the people in administrative and

top management positions made their impress early on, but through conversations, casual contacts and formal meetings, one staff member in a subordinate position clearly emerged from the crowd as an individual with evident leadership capabilities; Virginia Naille Cesario. From the very first conversation, Virginia's strong traits were manifest; a high regard, affection and loyalty to the College; a strong and disciplined intelligence; a finely tuned command of the language; a long and involved experience with the Library; a strength of opinion; and an unshakeable candor and honesty. Those characteristics were invaluable in the unsettled personnel and management situation of that period, and I found myself calling upon her for advice and counsel at ever increasing opportunities.

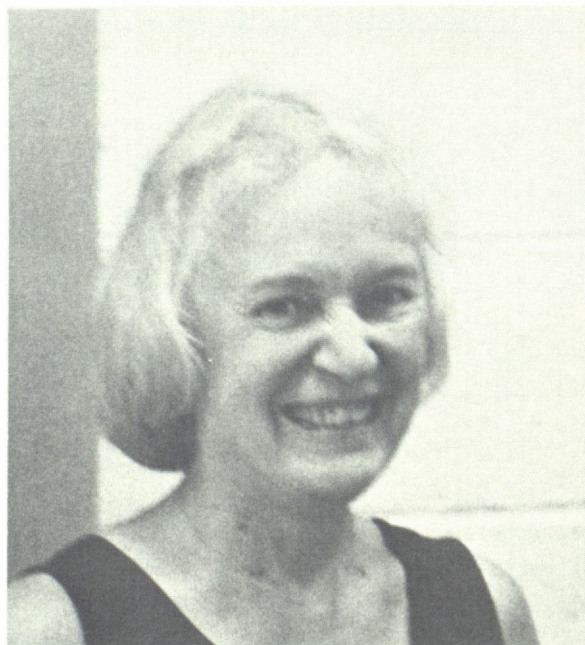
Of course her responses were almost always offered in a "nose in the air, this is the way I

feel, take it or leave it" manner; but one came to realize that this patrician reserve and self effacement were, at once, elements of her shyness and modesty, perhaps the most pronounced of her personal traits. Frankly, it was engaging to find one with so little interest in self-promotion, but it was also the cause of many early irritations between us, as one had to practically shout her down for her to accept the recognition and credit she had earned. Even such verbal bullying frequently did not prevail, and in such a situation I would be forced to an outright rejection of her expressed wishes and an absolute termination of further argument to see to it that her merit was acknowledged in some material manner.

As I came to rely on her counsel and judgment as staff member, Administrative Assistant, and finally, Deputy Chief Librarian, I found to my surprise that despite my substantially greater diversity of professional activity, work and managerial experience, she was frequently well ahead of me in some of the more sophisticated areas of librarianship -- areas of operation in which she had had little or no contact in her tenure at City. Throughout the years, she had apparently done her homework well and the Library profited immensely from her knowledge of national Library affairs and pioneering ventures. She applied that knowledge in what amounted to a continuous mini-crusade to improve services and functions at the library. She was tireless in her critical and detailed analysis of operations and in the examination of the possibility of adopting or adapting services, procedures, or mechanisms which had proved out in other academic institutions.

When she decided to participate in national library affairs, her detailed knowledge of nationwide currents stood her in good stead. Not that she made it any easier for the committee chair people of the ALA than she had made it for us back at the College, for her aloofness again prevented her from placing her name in nomination for the offices for which she was a natural candidate. However, once the shield of her reserve had been dented by appointment to a national committee; her knowledge, competence and diligence manifested themselves and she was elected, appointed and reappointed to a continuing series of national professional work groups and has served as chair on many occasions. For a decade and a half she has left a lasting impression on the numerous professional areas in which she served.

Her last contribution, however, was perhaps her best -- to steer the flagship library of the City University system through the shoals of a depression perhaps un-



Prof. Kenny

equalled in American academic history. I can still recall Virginia's address on the New York fiscal crisis at the Centennial Conference of the A.L.A. in Chicago in 1976. The low-key, sober, objective recital made us all aware of the financial afflictions of the Library even more graphically than would have been the case with a presentation limned in purple. Many of my colleagues noted at the time that they would not have her job at triple the salary. Yet through those strikingly depressing years Virginia kept the course, maintained services with a constantly dwindling staff, and even developed funds for continued professional participation and the required physical reorganization of the Library.

The College and the Library were remarkably lucky to have Virginia in place at the right time. She is a great lady and an extraordinary librarian. She has earned her retirement. I know she will refuse any retirement rituals, but I hope she bends just enough to read these sentiments. She leaves the library with our respect, our admiration and our love.

RECLASS PROJECT MILESTONE -- PHASE I NOW COMPLETE

With the alteration of the 145,498th call number, the City College Library completed a reclassification project which started 10 years ago and changed call numbers on 1,135,131 catalog cards. The project was undertaken shortly after the Library stopped classifying books according to the Bliss system and turned to the system followed by the Library of Congress (LC). Although the Library has finished the project as originally defined, we are calling it Phase I because there are still over 100,000 titles in the Cohen Library stacks which are classed in Bliss and which we hope to reclassify some day.

The decision to adopt LC had been made for economic reasons. The Library of Congress has already assigned a call number to most books purchased for our collections. For those titles not classed by LC, the change to the new system has still meant better classification than under Bliss because the LC classification tables are kept up-to-date to accommodate new fields of knowledge. But we should not talk about Reclass without acknowledging that the Bliss system was abandoned with some reluctance and then with a strong sense of "the passing of an era". After all, the Bliss system, which is of great interest to students of library science, had been developed right here at City College by Henry Evelyn Bliss, a college librarian, and some librarians here felt that City College was obligated to keep it up. (We still get one or two calls each year from students or researchers who want more information on the Bliss classification scheme.)

Once the decision to switch systems was made, reclassification began so that collections of similar materials would not be split in two. Since the disadvantages of a split collection especially are acute in open stack libraries, the Reclass Project, organized by the then Head of Technical Services, Prof. Yerchanik Iskendarian, and directed by Prof. Elizabeth Rajec, began its work with the divisional libraries which have open stack collections (Art, Science, Music, etc.). After completing these divisional collections the Project turned to certain heavily used materials in the Cohen Library stacks, such as the Shakespeare collection, and finally to books with Bliss call numbers most likely to be confused with LC call numbers.

When the Library is moved into the North Academic Complex late in 1981 the fact that a "Phase II" of the Reclass Project has not been undertaken will cause some problems. Those 100,000 titles with Bliss call numbers (mostly in the fields of literature and history) will be on open stacks as will the titles purchased and cataloged in those same fields since 1967. Browsing the open stacks can be hampered by the split. Students and faculty will have to become familiar with two sets of call numbers in their areas of interest. Also, some of the Bliss call numbers will look like some of the LC call numbers to the layman and confusion may result. To minimize problems like these the Library Department is investigating possibilities such as marking all Bliss books with some sort of symbol before the move to the NAC. Also under consideration are various shelving arrangements which may alleviate the problems of split collections. Any such schemes are partial, of course, and it is hoped, only temporary. Let us hope that some day we can afford to begin Phase II!

THE LAST DAYS OF THE CARD CATALOG

The card catalog--love it or hate it--its days are numbered. Librarians, especially catalogers, love it. It is a dynamic tool which can be updated daily. But its most ardent enthusiasts admit that the card catalog has deficiencies. For example, filing is costly and must follow complicated rules. As catalogs grow, filing becomes slower and more intricate and the chance of error increases. It is commonly accepted that at least 2% of all cards filed are put in the wrong place. At City College that means at least 40,000 cards probably are misfiled in our main public catalog. Upkeep is also very expensive. You can imagine the cost to libraries across the country when the Library of Congress, the chief supplier of cataloging copy, decided to change AFRICA, SOUTH to SOUTH AFRICA, FLYING SAUCER to UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECT, and CHINA (PEOPLES REPUBLIC OF, 1949-) to just CHINA. Hundreds of such adjustments are made annually, and each time the cards under the old term have to be withdrawn, erased retyped and refiled. Finally, cards wear out, corners with call numbers break off, and the print on cards which have been duplicated by xerography turns to dust and blows away.

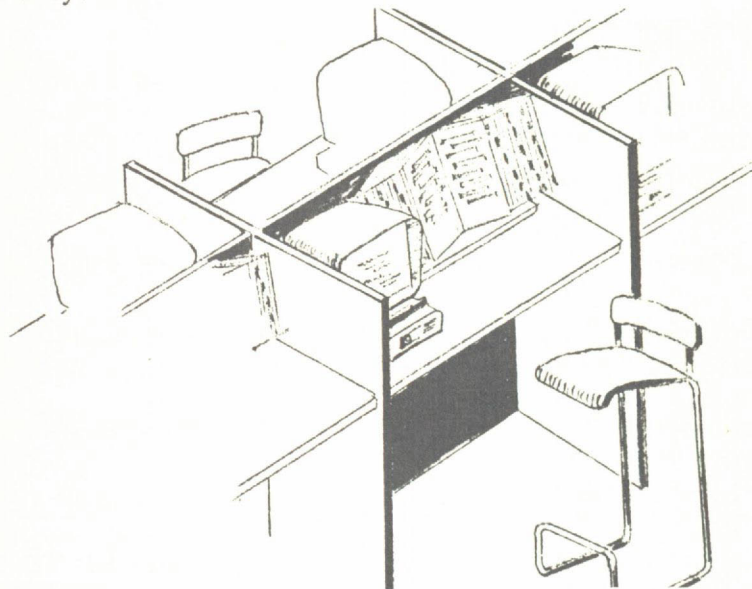
Library users and librarians will find a common answer to some of their problems with the card catalog in a new form of catalog which City College Library hopes to introduce around the time it moves into the new building (NAC). The new catalog will be based on computer files and will be produced in a format which will be more flexible for library users: computer output microfiche. When students and faculty walk into the new library in the North Academic Center, they should find that the wooden catalog cabinets have been replaced by public catalog "stations". Each station will house a microfiche reader and a looseleaf notebook or stand containing display panels of microfiche. Each fiche (a piece of film approximately 4" by 6") will contain as much information as is now contained in around two drawers of catalog cards. Although students and faculty will have to learn how to put the fiche into the reader (a matter of answering the question "which end is up?") the display of catalog information should be easier to interpret. The fiche will contain equivalents of pages of cataloging information, and the fiche readers will permit the display of a full page at once. Such a page of cataloging information is easier to browse than is a succession of single cards in a card catalog. Knowledge of sophisticated filing rules is not needed. Also, since the catalog is produced by computer, filing errors will disappear. Catalog stations will be available all over the library, not

just in one central location. If there is enough faculty interest, such stations can be made available in department offices or perhaps in faculty lounges (if City College ever has a faculty lounge, of course). Extra copies of the catalog will be quite inexpensive. The major cost of setting up a satellite station will be around \$200 for a fiche reader. Another advantage to the new catalog will be the "instant bibliography" capability. That is, if a student or a faculty member wants a paper copy of the cataloging information he has found, he can make it on a reader-printer for a small fee.

From the librarian's point of view the new catalog has obvious advantages. It is less labor-intensive than the present card catalog because there are no cards to file, misfile, or change. When terms require changing, a command to the computer will result in updated entries appearing in the next edition of the catalog.

The new catalog may require some adjustments and some training for faculty and students alike. It would be prudent for faculty to become familiar with the full implications of the new catalog before it is implemented in 1981 so that they can work with librarians in introducing it to students. This might be done by working with departmental or school library committees and with the Faculty Senate Committee on the Library.

A typical
catalog station



RUSSELL SAGE COLLECTION ON SOCIAL WELFARE

The Library wishes to remind the College community that the Russell Sage Collection on Social Welfare contains printed records of societies and agencies which worked to improve the health, housing, recreation and economic conditions of the poor in major American cities during the past century. There is also some material from Great Britain and France. Of special relevance today may be the activities of the societies which aided various ethnic groups. The reports, proceedings and other materials in the Collection, which came to the College from the Russell Sage Foundation in 1949, cover the period from the 1880s to 1962. While 1962 is the official closing date, there are some scattered materials for the following decade. Monographs from the collection have been integrated with the general collection and are accessible through the public catalog in Cohen Library. For more information about access to the Russell Sage Collection call Professor Barbara Dunlap in Archives and Special Collections.

NEWS FROM THE DIVISIONS.

The Archives Division has acquired a photographic file from the Campus news paper and a file of materials detailing renovation of South Campus buildings in the 1950's. Prof. Mervin Jules, Chairman of the Art Department, has given the Art Library several books in the field of African art as a memorial to the distinguished black American artist Charles H. Alston. Mr. Alston, who died in 1977, was a member of the City College Art Department from 1960 until 1976. Among the gift books are Benin art, by W. and B. Forman and Philip Dark, London, 1960 and African folktales and sculpture, selected and edited by Paul Radin, New York, 1952.

Mrs. Jackie Douglas has joined the Catalog and the Serial Divisions as a College Research Assistant. Mrs. Douglas was formerly with the Library of SUNY-Maritime. The Education Library has produced two more in its series of bibliographies called Booklists: Books without words through grade 4 and Biographies for ages 5 - 16, a selected list. The Music Library reports that the CUNY music librarians have produced a union list of CUNY music periodical holdings which was edited by Diette M. Bailly of Brooklyn College Library.

STAFF ACTIVITIES

Professor Peter Goy is the Co-Chairman of the Consortia on International Librarianship. He participated as Assistant Director for the United States by teaching two courses at the EUROPA PROJECT, 1979, a group of summer courses in Munich co-sponsored by Rockland Community College, SUNY, and the Ukrainian Free University in Munich. Prof. Goy was also a delegate to the 29th Congress Kirche im Not held in Königstein im Taunus, West Germany this July. Prof. Martin Helgesen addressed the City College Newman Club, October 11, on the history and present situation of Anti-Catholicism in America. Prof. Elizabeth Rajec was elected treasurer of the PhD Alumni Association, CUNY. She is also liaison for the disciplines of German, Librarianship and Slavic studies and chairs the Library Discipline Committee of the University Committee on Research, CUNY. Prof. Timothy Tung has published an article on the feature page of the People's Daily a newspaper with a circulation of 10,000,000. He has also published articles on American publishing and contemporary American literature in DuShu and the New China quarterly.

KEEPING UP

American Library Association Convention, Dallas, Tx. June 24-28: Professors Cesario, Horwitz, Kuhner, Rajec; New York Library Association Convention, Syracuse, October 18-20: Professors Horwitz, Kenny, Rajec; Preservation of Library Materials, Rutgers University, July 19-20: Prof. Dunlap; Music Library Association Automation Committee, October 18, New York: Prof. Henderson; METRO workshop on AACRII and Serials, New York, October 11: Professors Burghardt, Knieriem and Mrs. Franklin; International Association of Music Librarians meeting in Salzburg, Austria; Prof. Peterson; PRECIS Indexing, Columbia University: Prof. Peterson.

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