

The Library: frustrating but not bad

By MARG SCHNEIDER

All of us, at one time or another during the year have become frustrated with the workings of the library, from mix-ups concerning over-due books and fines to the awareness that there are just not enough books to go around.

Perhaps the most annoying thing to most students is that if a book isn't on the shelf it is quite possibly stolen or just sitting on someone's desk and won't be used until the night before it's due. It has been suggested that the lending time be reduced. (At U of T books can be kept for only a week with no renewal allowed. Western will soon try out a new system where lending time is four weeks, subject to recall, with fines of \$1.00 a day if someone else needs the book.) It might also be a good idea to lend out indefinitely those books which may only be needed by one student a year. But the Senate Library Committee is apparently hesitant to change the present system, feeling that many students would be opposed.

However, even if the lending time is reduced, there would still be a problem with overdue books, since present fines don't seem to be much of an incentive for students. (Staff and faculty are not fined at all). It had been the practice to withhold marks until books were returned and fines were paid, but, plagued with computer malfunctions, the library staff can't tell who really still has, or owes for, over-due books. The only solution is to methodically check the shelves. This can be done at Steacie, with its relatively small collection of books, but at the Central Library it is an impossibility. So fines remain unenforceable. Perhaps the answer to the problem (once the computer is working again) is stiffer fines or, ultimately, revoking library privileges for those extremely delinquent.

Another big problem is book thefts, and the removal of articles from periodicals. Expected thefts is from two to three per cent, but with 300,000 volumes that amounts to a lot of books. It is estimated that the total expense of replacing a book comes to twice the actual book cost, considering time spent taking inventory and recataloguing. Also, cost of replacing a book which is out of print is often many times the original cost. At U of T the problem has been partly remedied by restricting first year students, as well as the general public from browsing through the stacks. Of course, at York this cannot be done and the only preventive measure we have is to inspect brief cases and packages at the exits. But even

this has a limited effect, for who can tell what a person is hiding under his clothes. Responsibility for preventing thefts must be accepted by each individual. Most often students will watch someone tearing out a page from a periodical but they won't bother to personally stop them. The students in Environmental Studies on the fifth floor also present a problem. They take books (particularly history and geography) upstairs without checking them out and never return them.

Missing articles from journals are replaced once and if they are stolen twice the magazine is replaced on microfilm. Actually microfilm does have certain advantages. It is not very stealable, more durable than paper and a journal on microfilm is as little as one quarter the cost of a subscription. However, searching for and taking notes from articles on microfilm is much less convenient than flipping through the actual magazine. There are also a limited number of microfilm readers which cost around \$1,000 each.

I would like to add a few words about the part time staff in the library. These people are not there to help with very specific or complex questions. They can tell you whether a particular book is in or out, or reserve it for you. But it takes up to two years of training to really know all the technicalities. That is what the full time librarians are for.

Presently, there is no way to inform students of new developments in the library, such as recent acquisitions. For example Mr. Bazin, the former art curator at the Louvre who has recently come to York has the use of 15,000 books which are accessible to students at his own discretion. These books will remain at York after he leaves. Some students are not aware of many of the library facilities, like the music listening room and the collection of classical and pop music, or the collection of government documents, or the map room which contains all kinds of travel information and detailed maps of foreign cities. So the administration has been considering the possibility of publishing a regular bulletin to keep the York community informed. There are many libraries in Toronto, such as the Centre of Criminology at U of T and the Munciple Reference Library in City Hall, which few people know about. There is discussion of putting together a booklet containing pertinent information about these resource centres including location, type of information available, rules, and whether they are open to the public.

Another aspect of the Central



The infamous Library.

photo by Tim Clark

Library is the art. It must be understood that money for the art comes from a separate building fund and that these projects do not directly take away from money allotted for books. However the interesting thing is that although all art on campus is supposed to be exclusively Canadian, David Partridge, who did the nail sculptures was born in Akron Ohio. He came to Canada in 1935 and moved to London, England in 1962. He served in the RCAF, so he must have been a Canadian citizen,

which I suppose is better than nothing.

The Kinetic Sculpture on either side of the escalator is a Michael Hayden creation. When it's finished it will flash lights and play electronic music. The question is whether the noise will disturb anyone who is trying to work.

It has seemed to me that the library administration is quite interested in student opinion. The bibliography department is open to suggestions for new purchases and

does try to be in tune with students' needs. But there is only one student on the Senate Library Committee (he's from Glendon, which doesn't really help those of us on the main campus) and not enough library staff represented as well. However, suggestions are welcome. The person to speak with in the Central Library is Miss J. Carruthers. And while you're in the mood, why not write a letter to the Chairman of the Senate Library Committee, Mr. D. Solitar, N520, Ross Building.

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