

Criticism, if it is factual and constructive, although unpleasant to the one to whom it is aimed, should always be welcomed. Even if it should not entirely meet those specifications, it may still produce some good, especially if it is brought out into the open, as is the case with Mr. Cabanatan's "Paging the USC Librarian." At least it affords the person or institution concerned an opportunity to defend themselves and, where necessary, to clarify matters.

In trying to give an answer to Mr. Cabanatan's complaints, I must at the outset clear up two factual mistakes he makes in his clamor for a thorough-going reform of our library policies. In the first place, there is no rule in this library which prescribes that Reference books may only be read for one hour at a time! Mr. Cabanatan seems to have confused Reference and Reserve books. It is only the latter which are subject to this restriction. In the second place, our critic is equally mistaken in asserting that only books which are "food for the imagination . . . and fiction books" are marked by "B" and can be borrowed for a longer period than just overnight. He forgot the several thousand volumes kept in the book stack, each of which can be borrowed for one week at a time; the several tens of thousands of volumes in the Graduate Section, which may be borrowed for three days at a time, and the numerous "B"—books in such subjects as, e.g., Religion, the Natural Sciences (kept on the Browsing Shelves of the Science Library), Literature, Geography and Travel, Biography and History, etc. which can hardly be called "just food for the imagination."

After having cleared up these two pieces of misinformation, I would like to explain to our clientele why the restrictions that do exist are being imposed. Modern libraries, unlike the libraries of older times, generally are guided by a rule which may be stated as follows: As much freedom as possible with no more restraint than needed. In an ideal world the rule might be made to read: "Perfect freedom without any restrictions". Unfortunately, we do not live in such a world. There will always have to be some restrictions to the freedom we so crave, precisely in order to safeguard our essential freedoms. Libraries, being part and parcel of this imperfect world of ours, cannot escape the general law; willy-nilly they will have to enforce certain restrictions governing the use of the material kept in them. As a matter of fact, there is no library in the world which does not have at least some restrictive rules. What kind of restrictions will be imposed, and how far they will extend, depends on the type of library for which they are made, the needs and idiosyncrasies of its particular clientele, and, last but not least, the financial resources it can command. It is in the light of these conditions under which a library has to operate that its various restrictions must be viewed, which otherwise may appear as pure arbitrariness. If I may illustrate this by a few examples: Such a tremendous library, e.g., as the New York Public Library, with its immense holdings and great financial resources, does not permit any book to be taken out for home reading. Closer home, in the Philippines, we generally find the use of books in public libraries and public school libraries to be rather rigidly controlled, primarily because the libraries are held accountable for any

The Chief Librarian Answers

JOSEPH BAUMGARTNER, SVD

book losses in excess of a certain number of volumes. Since losses inevitably mount with unrestricted access to the books, these libraries just find themselves unable to adopt, e.g., the open shelf system.

The USIS Library, which Mr. Cabanatan picked as a counterfoil to show up what he considers the shortcomings of our library policies, can afford to adopt a very liberal policy. Leaving aside the question of financial resources available to the two libraries under comparison, there is the absolute necessity for our library to build up its collections as rapidly as possible in order to reach the goal of becoming a satisfactory university library. At the moment, our library, despite its impressive holdings of more than 80,000 volumes, which place it in the top bracket of university libraries in this country, is still woefully short of the goal it must attain, which is in the neighborhood of 250,000-300,000 volumes! The USIS library, on the other hand, is and can be satisfied with a "steady-state" collection, which it does not intend to exceed. It can concentrate its relatively ample resources on the kind of books which will best serve to project the image of the United States to the host country in which the library operates. It need not invest its funds for the purchase of expensive sets of periodicals, research monographs, scientific manuals and encyclopedias of the more advanced type, or in any of the other expensive scholarly and scientific publications, which are the lifeblood of an academic library. If some of its books are lost, — and according to my information many are — it can always replace them with similar books. There is rarely a need to replace precisely those title which have been lost. In all these respects it is at the other pole from our library. (Even so it does not let its reference books outside the library. It only uses that label more sparingly than we do).

A fair assessment of our library policies would have to compare them with those of other libraries in the same category, viz., college and university libraries in the Philippines. When such a comparison is made, our library can confidently stand up as one of the best-equipped and best-administered in this city as well as in the country as a whole. To mention just one thing: It was our library that pioneered in the introduction of the open-shelf system in this city, which was only slowly and reluctantly adopted by other college and university libraries. Even now there are college libraries in this

city where no books are kept on open shelves and the books have to be asked for at the counter. I am even told that in one library a student has to have the permission of no less than the College President himself to take out a book for home use. To go farther afield: The big library of the University of Sto. Tomas up to now issues all its books to undergraduates only over the library counter; even the books in the Graduate library were at my last visit kept in locked cabinets, which are only opened at the specific request of a library client. The only concession to the open shelf system made — at least in the main library — are a few tables placed on the mezzanine floor, where a library client, after obtaining a special permission, may use books he has picked under the watchful eyes of a library assistant. Finally, there are many colleges which do not permit the borrowing of reference books for use outside the library at all.

As can be seen from the foregoing, all college and university libraries lay down such rules concerning the use of their materials as will ensure the safeguarding of the library property against loss and damage. It is in deciding precisely where to draw the line between reasonable freedom of access and the safeguarding of library property that different institutions come to different decisions. Some — many in our country — decide to play it safe. They thus hedge the use of their books with numerous controls. Our decision — made long ago — was to keep restrictions to a minimum, at least as far as access to the materials is concerned, and to achieve the safeguarding of library property by stricter surveillance, especially at the library exits.

This brings us to the question whether the particular restrictions which Mr. Cabanatan singles out for his censure could not be done away with. To begin with the Reserve books, the only ones subject to the one-hour rule, it should be remembered, in the first place, that these books constitute only a small fraction of the more than 80,000 volumes available in our library. Even so, librarians consider the Reserve Book Section as something of a nuisance and an evil. It ties down library personnel who might be more profitably employed otherwise, it does put obstacles in the way of the reader, especially in limiting the time for which he may hold a book; and at times may indeed cause real hardship for a particular client. To this extent I quite agree with my critic. (But he engages

A Holiday in June

A holiday in June, a street parade,
And you and I are basking
Under the yellow vehemence
Of the summer sun;
It is Sunday at eight
And nine and ten o'clock
And we are singing
While morning comes slowly
To where the sun is nooning.

Our faces blossom to the touch
Of soothing sunlight
That enlivens young blood
Like the force that with the June rain
Gives the green to rain-starved grass
In summer-smear'd lawns.

The sun settles on where your face
Is twin flesh and a rose
And with a power silent as time
Reddens slowly, beautifully,
An Eve-face that glows
With the quiet redness of a rose
And pats a tremor in my breast
For my heart dances in typhoon.

My mind fashions a song of praise
For you are full of the sun's countries
I want to burn tenderly, lovingly,
With the fire that breeds
The blushings of your cheeks
I see the metaphors of life in your face.

The morning is a creature in the hollow of our minds
For it is of the morning we speak
In the moment that now is
And again is now;
Our voices worming through
Misty labyrinths of memory:
(What's good in the morning?
You asked the man beside you
Who whispered a language of sighs;
Whose sighs punctuated a song).

But the morning is a teacher,
And the young sun gives us light:
We are the young who ride
On the float of time
Enjoying and weathering
The warm extravagance of sunlight
Warbling the songs the old have sung
In the concerts of time past.

I want to hold this moment's Nirvana
And speak of morning as a lover lisps
The language of the heart's fever
But ah, a day is not forever
And even if youth is young
The lamp burns and then again burns;
The flame devours the wick,
The fire consumes, the fire consumes the oil.

Sing to me the joys of youth
And even on a Sunday may I be sad
For even in song and mirth, I run
To where holidays are fewer:

This is the end of my laughter,
This is the smoldering of young fire.

Porfirio S. Daclan
College of Law



in double-talk when he asks: "Can one read a book in an hour?" The answer is: One can, and often does, read in a book for an hour! Students do it all the time.) Why then do librarians not simply scrap the Reserve Book Section? The answer is: Although something of an evil, it is a necessary evil. Books "placed on reserve" are particularly selected reference books, which either have been assigned by a professor for the reading of a whole class (sometimes several classes) or books which must take the place of unavailable or too expensive textbooks. Since a library such as ours cannot afford to have more than a maximum of 10 copies of any particular title, the only way to assure that all the students of a class get a fair chance to these books is to restrict the time during which the book may be held by any one reader. Why can't the library acquire more copies of every title in the Reserve Section, let's say 20-50 copies, so that each reader might get hold of the title assigned to him for "the full 24 hours?" In principle, it could be done. But it would mean diverting practically the whole library budget to the purchase of this type of books. This would put an almost complete stop to the further growth of the library and eventually convert it into a collection of outdated and thus practically useless textbooks. (Some college libraries not so far from USC appear to have been built up along those lines. But what libraries they are!)

There is yet another important reason for placing books on reserve, and my critic is on its track, when he asks — rhetorically, I am sure — whether the restriction imposed on these books implies "lack of confidence among (sic) the students" and whether "thieves reside (sic) in this university." If by "thieves" he means professionals, the answer is "no". But it does not take professional thieves to steal books from a library, and there are some 5,000 reasons in the form of more than 5,000 volumes that have disappeared from our library shelves in the course of the last 15 years to show that books have been stolen by our, oh! so well-behaved students! Unless I am badly mistaken, our students are made of the same kind of stuff like the students in other schools are made of and thus subject to the same temptations — which are, amongst other things, to help themselves to a book, especially if they are hard pressed to meet a teacher's deadline. (Unfortunately,
(Continued on page 28)

The Chief Librarian Answers

(Continued from page 13)

once they have got the book "safely" out of the library, they only in an extremely few cases remember to return it.) The danger of theft arises most acutely with specially assigned books. It is then only a matter of elementary precaution to issue such books only over a counter so that nobody will be tempted to spirit them out of the library. (To put the blame for this state of affairs on the shoulders of our counselors and teachers, as Mr. Cabanatan rather smugly suggests, is poppycock. All they can do is advise and admonish. Whether or not their charges will listen to their good counsels is something over which the counselors have no control and for which, as a consequence, they cannot be held responsible).

The second class of books which cannot be taken out for "the full 24 hours" are our reference books (those marked "R"; but, to repeat what I have stated above, they are not subject to the one-hour limitation). Also in this case, there are several very good reasons which make it advisable to impose this restriction. Amongst others, and perhaps most decisive in leading to this particular restriction, is the librarian's desire to get as much "mileage" as possible out of these books, i.e., to make them available to as many readers as possible. If books of this sort could be kept for a whole 24 hours, many of them would be almost permanently out of the library since the same borrower or a succession of borrowers could ask for the same book over and over again. Under existing regulations the book is, during day time, on the library shelf, where it is available to a good many readers who are (supposed to be) around the university premises anyway. If it were kept in the home of a borrower, it would lie idle for a great part of the time, since the borrower's time will have to be divided amongst several activities, only one of them being the reading of the book. In short, keeping reference books in the library during class hours will make them available to up to a dozen readers whereas in the other case they would each serve the needs of only one reader. The one time where nobody and nothing need interfere with one's reading, viz., after class hours, is precisely when he is allowed to have the book all for himself. To me, this makes sense.

Coming finally to the last and no doubt most deeply felt complaint of Mr. Cabanatan, viz., that he suffered a rebuff when trying to get a "blue card" for the Graduate Section, we admit that this, indeed, looks like rank discrimination. Once more, he is mistaken. In the first place, it merely deprives him of the privilege to study in the Graduate Section; it does not deprive him of the chance to borrow books from it, to the extent that he really needs them, for 3 days at a time.

The reason why he and many others like him cannot be admitted to the room itself, is simply the limited space available coupled with our obligation to provide sufficient seating capacity and undisturbed reading to the clients for whom

the Graduate Section of the library is primarily intended, which is faculty members, graduate students, and other people engaged in serious research works, in that order. Since under the circumstances only a very limited number of undergraduates can be admitted, it was the logical thing to admit only those who are in need of regular consultation of the kind of books kept in that part of the library. These happen to be books in the fields of the humanities and the social sciences. Hence the decision to admit only students majoring in Liberal Arts subjects, as far as we can accommodate them. As of this writing 73 students in all, i.e., just a little bit over 1% of our student population, have been given this privilege; this is also about the limit to which we can go.

Mr. Cabanatan is a Commerce student. There seems to be no real necessity for his studying in the Graduate Section, especially since he has a very spacious Commerce Library with several thousand volumes of books bearing on his own subject field at his disposal. If he should have the praiseworthy desire to acquire, together with the requisite knowledge in his chosen field, also a good liberal education, well and good. There is nothing and nobody to prevent him from borrowing the books he may need to further his wish. He may borrow them either from the Undergraduate collection of the Main Library or, where necessary, the Graduate Section or, finally, the book stack, the latter two via the card catalog. (We hope that as a Senior student he knows how to use it!)

Before I conclude, I would like to use this opportunity to bring to the attention of all (and I mean all!) our library clients two big problems about which they can do something. The first of these, is the horrible way in which many of our readers handle books: To begin with nine out of every ten readers turn the pages of a book by thumbing or bunching the pages at the lower corner instead of turning them with the finger tips at the upper edge, as civilized readers do. Add to this the smearing and defacing of the pages of our books with underlinings, readers' comments and thumbprints produced by unwashed hands, using books as carry-alls for whatever papers and other paraphernalia a student may carry about his person, thus breaking the backs of the books, or letting them lie around unprotected where cockroaches and other vermin may deface and destroy the bindings, and other uncivilized ways of handling books. If so many of our books re-appear in bindings produced by our bindery shop and a good many others are in a rather deplorable state of preservation, it must be largely blamed on these bad habits of our library clients. As it is, sometimes a brand new book has to be turned over to the bindery for a major repair job after having been issued to only a few readers. Even more abominable and downright nasty is the practice of a few students to tear out pages from books or cut out their illustrations, as happens again and again.

Either these students are such unsocial and near-criminal elements that they just don't care for anybody but themselves or they are so stupid that they don't even realize that by perpetrating such acts they destroy a book for all practical intents and purposes. There is no place for students of this sort in our university, or any university, for that matter.

The second problem is the habit of many library clients to return books, magazines, or, e.g., the card trays of the card catalog to just any available free space, not caring in the least whether the next client who wants to use the item in question will have to go through a frustrating and time-consuming search before he may finally find what he is looking for or give up in despair. Library readers are, however, expected to return only periodicals and the general reference books — those kept on the middle aisle shelves. All other books must be left on the tables to be shelved by library assistants. The ignorance or flagrant disregard of this regulation is to blame for the sometimes truly chaotic state of the shelves in the Undergraduate Section of the library.

In an extensive collection like that of our Graduate Section, this malpractice can lead to disastrous consequences; it will often make it entirely impossible to locate a book which may be urgently needed by people in research. Once it has become misplaced somewhere amongst the close to 40,000 volumes in that section, it is as good as lost. This is, by the way, one of the reasons why we just cannot permit undergraduate students (except the few provided with a "blue card") to browse amongst the shelves of the Graduate Section. It would result in a chaos worse and more disastrous than the one encountered on the book shelves of the Undergraduate Section.

It is bad library manners such as these which, beside the reasons mentioned before, force the librarian to impose restrictions if he wants to discharge his duty of preserving the more important books in his library and to keep them available for readers and researchers. He would be the first to let go of the check-reins if the conduct of his clients would improve to such a degree as to warrant even freer access to the resources of his library than is the case now. Until we get that new "breed" of library clients, your "new policies", Mr. Cabanatan, will have to wait. There is, however, one improvement we can effect at this time — it has, in fact, been ordered half a year ago — which is a more sparing use of "R" — marking in favor of a greater number of so-called Browsing ("B"-) books. That nothing much has yet been done to implement the order is mainly due to the prolonged absence of the Assistant in charge of the Undergraduate Section. How far we shall be able to go with this kind of "liberalization" will depend to no small degree on the way our readers will treat the books thus made more readily available to them. ‡