

**OPINION**

# Fill 'er up, this time for good

Sometimes, no matter how hard you try to keep an eye on the gauge, your gas tank just seems to empty overnight. Sometimes, no matter how good a job they are doing, prison directors just seem to "run out of gas" too. Raymond Procnier, director of the Texas Department of Corrections, resigned Monday.

Procnier, who took over the reigns of the TDC 13 months ago, was instrumental in instigating prison reforms aimed at improving living conditions and ending a 13-year-old lawsuit against the prison system.

When Procnier took office in May 1984, he said he would stay at the position for no longer than two years. While his resignation was not unexpected, it would have been nice if Procnier had been able to serve his full two years. But poor health and lack of "gas" would not permit it.

Although Procnier's leadership will be sorely missed, Lane McCotter, who was named as his replacement, should prove to be an equally competent director, despite the big shoes he has to fill.

McCotter's familiarity with the Texas prison system, the second largest in the nation, is essential if he is going to continue the programs started by Procnier.

The ball of prison reform in the TDC has been put in motion. We hope McCotter can keep the ball rolling and keep his gas tank full.

The Battalion Editorial Board

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# How does A&M's library compare with others?

The Association of Research Libraries evaluates libraries by size of collection, number of volumes added, size of budget, number of staff, etc. In no instance is quality considered, but then quality is a rather subjective matter and is very difficult to judge from information obtained in a brief questionnaire. In the most recent ARL report on member libraries, Texas A&M is ranked 42nd out of 105.

**Charles R. Schultz**  
Guest Columnist

The ARL has a numerical index rating similar to the Dunkle Index for football teams. The major difference is that the library numbers are considerably lower.

Harvard, at the very top of the list, has a rating of 3.01. Texas A&M is number 42 at .05. At the very bottom is Case Western Reserve with a rating of -1.65. Thus while Texas A&M is up as high as 42nd, it is only 1.60 better than the lowest ranking member of ARL while it is 2.96 worse than the top ranking library.

In the evaluation factor of total size of holdings, Texas A&M ranks 78 out of 105. This is A&M's lowest score in any of the factors. The University's 1.5 million volumes, is far below the volume counts of the real giants: Harvard — 10.7 million, Yale — 8 million, University of Illinois — 6.6 million and University of California — 6.5 million.

At least 26 public, four state and three non-ARL academic libraries in the United States have larger collections than A&M. Two of these three academic libraries are in Texas: Southern Methodist University and Texas Tech.

A&M ranks 46th in volumes added, but its 68,000 is considerably below the 242,000 of University of California Berkeley, or the 203,000 of UCLA.

A&M ranks 30th in microform holdings, but a major error has been discovered in A&M's tabulation, the correcting of which will cause A&M to decline in this ranking. Even if the reported 2.2 million items were correct, A&M is still far below Washington's 4.1 million.

Although A&M ranks 24th in the amount of money spent for current serials (\$1.7 million), it is far down the list at 68th in the number of serials received (17,900). The University of Houston, which spends \$400,000 less than A&M, receives 7,500 more serial titles than does A&M.

California Berkeley which spends only \$800,000 more than A&M, receives more than 72,000 more serial titles.

With a total staff of 281 and a professional staff of 65, A&M ranks 45th and 48th respectively.

In total money spent for salaries and wages, however, A&M is slightly lower at 51st. This would indicate that A&M pays below average salaries. The

University spends \$13,161 per staff member compared with the \$19,727 spent by Howard University.

Even Howard, with by far the largest staff, pays \$2,400 more per person than A&M does. There may be some consolation in knowing that A&M does spend about \$3,200 more per staff member than does Alabama, which appears to be the most penurious with staff salaries.

When one considers that the total expenditures for libraries at A&M did not exceed \$1 million until 1968-69, the \$8.2 million spent in 1983-84 appears to be a grandiose sum. When it is compared with the \$24.6 million spent by Harvard for libraries in 1983-1984, it does not.

The only evaluation factors in which A&M ranks among the top ten are interlibrary loaning and borrowing. It ranks ninth in both areas.

The 34,360 items lent are affected by several factors: a document delivery agreement with the National Agricultural Library, willingness to provide materials to industry at very low costs and a hard-working staff which tries to fill every request it receives.

As large as that figure seems, it is very modest when compared with the 148,000 items lent by Minnesota.

Some might say that the relatively high ranking in interlibrary borrowing (12,573 items) is a result of the inadequacy of the collections. It may also be an indication of research activities. The number of items borrowed does not necessarily mean the collection is inadequate. Illinois, the third largest collection of ARL libraries, borrowed 126,329 items.

There are a number of things which can be extracted from the ARL statistics which apparently are not considered in the ranking.

Even though the annual volume of ARL statistics includes a record of the enrollment at each institution as well as one of the total holdings, there is no computation of the ratio of books per student. This could be quite critical.

The University of Houston, which ranks 92nd in holdings with 1,408,740 volumes, has 52 books for each student while A&M, which ranks 78th with 1,540,910 volumes, has only 45 volumes for each student.

Rice University, at 99th (1,189,015 volumes) has 245 volumes per student — five times as many as A&M.

The ARL provides ranking by total number of staff and total salaries and wages, but it does not provide rankings by a ratio. As is indicated above, A&M ranks in the upper 40s in the categories of number of staff and total salaries and wages, but in the average number of dollars expended per staff member it ranks considerably lower.

Admittedly, it may be that A&M's contribution to social security, health insurance and retirement are not included in its figures, even if one adds all of A&M's benefits, it still extends

over \$4,000 less per staff member than does Howard.

One factor which does not appear in ARL statistics but which is frequently used in evaluating the adequacy of library funding is the ratio of total library expenditures of the university.

Historically it has been suggested that between 4 and 5 percent of the total educational and general expenditures should be spent on the library.

Some institutions with a long standing commitment to excellent libraries have consistently devoted that much, or even more, to libraries. Although Texas A&M has devoted around 3 percent in recent years, there have been times when the figure was as low as .5 percent.

Thus, the neglect may not be as severe as it once was, but it is still neglect.

Certainly there are people who argue that size alone may not be a valid factor for evaluating libraries. There may be some truth to this claim just as there may be truth to the claim that not every 275 pound athlete will make an outstanding lineman for a major university football team. Certainly agility, speed, and desire would be factors in any football player's success just as the quality of books, facilities and dedication of staff are factors in determining the degree of excellence of a library. It is likely, however, that a 275 pound athlete will be more likely to excel as a lineman than will one weighing 125 pounds.

It is equally likely that a five- or 10-million volume library will have more books researchers need than will a 1.5 million volume.

Of the 41 libraries that rank above A&M, 19 have very good football teams to go with their very good libraries. Of the 63 libraries that rank below A&M, only 13 have good football teams. Six of the top 10 ARL libraries are at academic institutions which have excellent football programs.

It appears from all of this that there may well be some relationship between library and athletic excellence. Perhaps those Aggies who want a Southwest Conference or national championship in football should consider matching their contributions to athletics with equal amounts to the library.

According to the ARL index mentioned above, the A&M library is 1.16 better than that of Alabama. If all of this has any meaning then the Aggies should defeat the Crimson Tide this fall.

This, of course, does not take into consideration either the home field advantage which Alabama should enjoy and Alabama's revenge factor for the 1968 Cotton Bowl, or the desire of the Aggies to continue their domination of Alabama.

**Charles R. Schultz is the University Archivist for Texas A&M.**

# Hostages caught in real funhouse

Tuesday night I watched Dan Rather try to make some sense out of the Trans World Airline hijacking situation.



Cheryl Clark

I listened to the comments made by Rather as he evaluated President Reagan's speech. I listened to the reporters on location stating what they had seen in Beirut and what it meant. I also listened to the experts as they told America what they thought of the situation.

The comments, the statements and the opinions reminded me a funhouse at the county fair. But this is not the funhouse of our childhood. It is a funhouse of our nightmares or of a horror movie.

A funhouse where people can die, or you bump into a horribly deformed person, or you stumble around in a circle. A funhouse filled with distorting mirrors, rolling floors, darkened tunnels and eerie noises.

The hostages are in the funhouse. Unfortunately, so are some terrorists and some politicians and some gunmen. All are stumbling around in a maze of misty mirrors.

Last month Israel released 1,150 security prisoners from jail in exchange for three Israeli soldiers held by Palestinian guerrillas. The trade went against the normal Israeli policy of non-negotiation with terrorists. A policy of don't give into a terrorist's demands, no matter what the cost might be.

The Israeli government said it would release the Shiite guerrilla prisoners that the hijackers have demanded freedom for. The condition is that a high-ranking American official like the President must ask them.

Israel is willing to make a concession. The government will release about 700 guerrillas and transport them to Syria for the sake of approximately 40 American hostages. But Israel wants someone to ask for the favor.

Reagan is trying to walk a rolling floor in the funhouse. He knows the hostages have been taken off the plane and now are kept in various locations across Beirut without a forwarding address. But Reagan hesitates to ask for the favor.

"America will never make concessions to terrorism ... to do so will only invite more terrorism," Reagan said.

The hostages are no longer in the hijacker's controls. They are also no longer under the political protection of Nabih Berri, leader of the Shiite's Amal militia. Berri is working on the negotiations between the hijackers and the release of the Shiite prisoners held by Israel with the Red Cross as a possible liaison.

But Berri has a problem in the funhouse. Some people in Beirut could be jumping at him and making scary noises. His leadership in the Shiite militia is unsteady at best and he has no control over what other terrorist groups might do. Beirut has more than one terrorist group who might like to get their hands on an American hostage.

Reagan is facing another distorting

mirror in the funhouse. No country accepting the actions of the terrorists he doesn't know to whom to apply some heavy political muscle. Such as the threat of military retaliation.

I don't want Reagan to have to ask Israel for the favor of releasing 700 guerrillas outside Israel's borders. I don't want to owe another country that kind of favor.

I wanted the hostages rescued before they had been relocated "for their safety" in a Beirut suburb. I wanted the hijackers to realize that they couldn't terrorize the leaders of our government. I wanted a stronger message delivered to the other terrorist groups of the world that American leaders will not be intimidated by threats.

The hostage incident under Carter administration has not been forgotten.

None of my wants are happening. In fact, the funhouse has expanded to include the entire city of Beirut, with Reagan negotiators and Israeli officials shaking their heads from running in mirrors.

The hostages are in the funhouse. But they are in a darkened hallway waiting for someone to jump at them. I hope its to help them out.

Cheryl Clark is a senior journalism major and a columnist for The Battalion.

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