

## Judging books by the cover

Evans Library is poorly funded, but hope looms on the horizon

A library should be the heart of any institution of higher learning. But lately, students have been spouting a disturbing phrase — "The library sucks."

Columnist



Stephen Llano  
Senior history major

Perhaps this is because students can no longer enjoy a three-course meal while scribbling out equations on the fourth floor. Maybe this phenomenon is related to the disturbing "lost" or "missing, check shelf" errors which appear under the perfect book on NOTIS. Whatever the case, students always seem to have problems with the library, but many of them have not looked into the specialized processes which govern the policies and actions of the Sterling C. Evans Library.

Furthermore, talk of the library being inadequate should sound the alarm among students and faculty concerned about the quality of education at Texas A&M. First, one must consider how the quality of a library is measured. According to a fax from Charlene Clark, public relations officer for Evans Library, Texas A&M has more problems than the football linkings. Among 109 Texas research libraries, A&M ranks 66th in number of volumes, with 367,072 total. In comparison, the archives at the University of Texas rank 5th with 7,329,663 volumes. This difference of 4,962,591 books is quite a significant number.

Moreover, A&M ranks 38th in number of volumes added, 50th in number of current journals and 99th in total expenditures for the 1994-1995 academic year. UT, on the other hand, ranks 10th in all three respective fields of library operation. It would appear the library operating procedures at A&M need to be investigated.

The methodology for selecting new volumes for the Evans Library is intense. Steven Atkins, coordinator of collections, said the process involves many highly qualified individuals.

"We have selectors, who at least have a master's (degree) in a specific subject area," he said. "All the selectors right now have published at least one book themselves. Occasionally we have someone with a Ph.D. as a selector." Atkins said the book-approval process is another intricate endeavor.

"It's a year-long process," he said. "We deal with a variety of vendors and publishers [of] over 50 different sources. Sometimes we use our expertise to go deeper into a specific subject. Right now, we're working on a military history collection."

If the Evans Library has a staff of selectors with at least two college degrees and books under their belts, its administration cannot be blamed for a lack of quality materials on the shelf. Obviously, A&M's administration is going to have to make a higher financial commitment to the library. For students who find themselves depressed at the library's problems, take into account an old Chinese proverb: "It's always darkest before the dawn."

In my own personal test of the quality of Evans, I acquired a list of the top-100 books created by a private reading club, using several different university syllabi. Evans had at least one copy listed of every book on the list. In many cases, there were more than one copy available according to NOTIS. Even though my own little benchmark doesn't seem significant, it does prove the point that we have the basics necessary for improvement.

In a more broad area, Evans and Cushing are rarely seen as separate entities. Recently, Cushing was closed for renovations which should be completed by June 1998.

Although Cushing was scheduled to be demolished, its historical value was the ultimate rea-

son for its restoration, Clark said. "We did a careful study and decided that it (Cushing) was significant enough to save," Clark said. "When it's completed, it is going to be the home of special collections, rare books and archives — it's what every important library has."

The expansion of the library also will improve quality. The new section will feature expanded study areas for students, as well as new computer facilities. More storage space for volumes will be available. There also will be a parking garage for easier access to the facility, slated to be complete by August 1998.

In 1995, students voted to approve a Library Use Fee. While the fee is just beginning to make a difference in library funding, it will soon mean better facilities and more volumes.

With the way things are running now, it seems future Aggies will have one of the finest libraries anywhere.



## A Balanced Budget Amendment will keep students in the black

It is supported by 80 percent of the American people. It makes life easier on poor college students. It could be coming to a state legislature near you. It's the Balanced Budget Amendment, a necessary tool in building a bright American future.

If you were to write billions in checks, you would spend the rest of your life making license plates and showering with guys named Bubba. If the federal government were to do the same spending billions of dollars it does not have, there is no immediate consequence — and it has been doing so every year since 1969.

For students who cannot comprehend the problem, the last time the government spent within its means, the New York Jets won the Super Bowl.

Columnist



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While deficit spending cannot be blamed for 25 years of mediocre football, it does cause a whole host of other problems, such as high interest rates and less money available to spend on critical programs such as student loans and health care. As citizens of a free and equal society, we should expect our government to live under the same rules we do.

If the Balanced Budget Amendment passes Congress and is ratified by three-fourths of the states, expectations will become realities. Make no mistake about it, America needs the Balanced Budget Amendment. Deficit spending is eating away at the government's ability to fund necessary programs, thus threatening America's future.

According to Federal Reserve Chair Alan Greenspan, the current practice of operating

on unbalanced budgets holds "serious, adverse consequences for financial markets and economic growth." In non-C-SPAN-junkie terms, unless we adopt the Balanced Budget Amendment, future generations will pay dearly when the national debt stalls economic growth and causes financial disaster.

Still, the term "Balanced Budget Amendment" may be a bit misleading. The proposed legislation does not actually mandate a balanced budget, it simply requires a three-fifths majority of both the House and Senate to pass a budget with a proposed deficit. This requirement can be waived in times of war or economic crisis.

The anti-balanced budget crowd and its cries of "Social Security checks will be impounded" are not credible. Deficit spending, not a fiscal responsibility, is the single greatest threat to the Social Security program. The Balanced Budget Amendment is the most important thing we can do to pre-

serve critical social programs.

Sadly, the opponents of the Balanced Budget Amendment care more about preserving wasteful spending than they care about protecting the poor, the elderly, and the students. Interest on the national debt consumes 40 cents of every government dollar, and it's constantly rising. Unless the budget is balanced, deficit spending will eventually result in government bankruptcy. Therefore, all student loans and checks (Social Security checks included) will be canceled. Hopefully, arrogant opponents of this common-sense legislation will see the light to do their part in preserving our future.

One of the most beneficial perks of a balanced budget for college students is the resulting drop in interest rates. The ratification of the Balanced Budget Amendment equals an estimated 2 percent drop in interest rates, shaving as much as \$2,200 from the cost of loan pay backs.

Those students who must take out thousands of dollars in loans just to attend college could use an extra \$2,200 dollars to help pay for food, housing and clothing. The last people on earth who deserve students' cash are Washington bureaucrats.

Moreover, fiscal responsibility should be the guiding principle for which budgets are engineered. Unfortunately, this wasn't the case with the prior congressional regime. The Balanced Budget Amendment, if passed and ratified, will make up for the 25 years of budgetary arrogance America has suffered. Now another quarter-century of financial irresponsibility is threatening to destroy critical social programs and take hard-earned cash from the pockets of overburdened taxpayers. Social Security, Medicare and student loans must be preserved, and the only way to do so is to mandate fiscal responsibility. The Balanced Budget Amendment must be passed and ratified, because too many people, college students included, depend upon it.

## Broadcast journalism students attempt to catch-up with UT

Student-produced television programs at Texas A&M have always been rare and virtually unknown. Unlike the thriving programs at the University of Texas.

UT has a student-run station, KRV9, and a film program in the College of Communications. UT even broadcasts shows on the Internet and has a student following only comparable to A&M's "Reinfeld" audience.

Production classes are essential for students to compete in an increasingly media-oriented society. As business moves onto the Internet and television comes more an instrument of commercialism and education than entertainment, those with the skills to compete will reign supreme.

It begins with adding courses and production opportunities to our curriculum. A&M students in Journalism 326, Television Production II, plan to bridge the gap and, it's about time. The course, instructed by KAMU-TV station manager John McCarroll, aims to provide students with practical production experience and a creative outlet. In past semesters, students produced Campus Journal, a program showcasing people who appeared in The Battalion every week, but hardly anyone watched the show.

A new image would define the show's success. The

Columnist



Jenne Hamlin  
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Television Production II students decided to quit having the traditional A&M brochure image shoved down their audience's throats. When they chose their show format, they decided to focus on things that usually slip through the cracks. They appropriately titled it *Between the Lines*.

Travis Stiba, class member and a senior chemical engineering major, said the show staff vows to remain true to its title, and leave traditional Aggie topics to other programs. "That aspect of A&M already gets exposure ad nauseum," Stiba said.

The show's premiere aired Feb. 20, on cable channel 15 after a live taping, featuring Day at the Beach director, Nick Veronis, and local band, Loud Plaid Jacket.

Amanda Taylor, a senior journalism major, said she was surprised that A&M didn't have student programming shows similar to the ones she watched as a student at UT.

"The shows at UT are very uncensored and a lot of people watch them," Taylor said. She said she hopes *Between the Lines* will attract a similar audience.

The problem with student productions is often financial. School administrators overlook funding for student shows, and merchants cannot advertise on a PBS-supervised show. Unless a large production program is already established on campus, ventures like these struggle.

Veronis said he was surprised that a university with one of the largest student-run film programming organizations in the country had so little to offer in comparison to UT.

"You know, for the money it takes to maintain the (rock climbing) wall in the Rec Center, you could have a film program," he said.

Journalism department head Dr. Charles Self agrees. He said A&M should seize the opportunity to serve citizens with stronger communication programs — if funding is available.

"But the University and those who support it have chosen to put their resources into other priorities," Self said.

Still, A&M students can benefit from this field. Trey White, a KAMU employee and a graduate architecture student, said production classes offer an edge to students in the age of new media.

"Knowledge of media will define almost every career field in the next century," he said.

McCarroll said although A&M doesn't have an intensive production program, students are more likely to get practical experience through local stations and production classes than their Austin counterparts.

"One of the big problems UT faces is huge enrollment in the program and only limited hands-on opportunities," he said.

Some students seek out production opportunities in the Bryan-College Station area. Art Sobarzo, the production class' teaching assis-

## EDITORIAL

THE BATTALION

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## SAVE MT. AGGIE

Student Government and Town Hall should work together to provide funds

The only thing more romantic than a rebel without a cause is a group of college students with one — especially when they organize under a catch phrase like "Save Mount Aggie!"

But sometimes a good cause must go through the proper channels, and this is what MSC Town Hall learned last week.

After getting its "Save Mount Aggie" concert approved by the MSC Council, Town Hall had to scrap the program because it did not fit with its mission statement. It is the kind of technical glitch that keeps things from getting done every day on this campus, but students should not be dismayed. There is a way to have a program similar to what Town Hall has proposed — a concert to raise awareness and appreciation for Mount Aggie that also might contribute funds to rebuilding the structure in a different location. Apparently, the football team needs more practice space, and nothing on this campus can compete with that.

Town Hall is not a political organization. It is a group of students that are good at what they do. Town Hall has brought a variety of programs to A&M that have entertained students for more than 15 years. And although its members deserve credit for doing so, adopting a cause is not something Town Hall should do.

If Student Government adopted the cause, planning a concert with Town Hall would be an excellent way to act on the students' wishes.

After all, students are generally proud of Mount Aggie and the uniqueness it offers to campus. It also is useful to many students who wish to learn how to ski in the warm, dry Texas climate. The two classes taught on Mount Aggie and the Ski Club only serve to increase students' opportunities to learn something new in college. For experienced skiers, Mount Aggie offers the only chance to practice.

Certain people in the administration may find Mount Aggie hard to look at, but that is no reason to strip students of the chance to hone their skills on its slopes. Student Government should stand up for Mount Aggie and work with Town Hall to keep this issue from being settled without the student voice being heard.

Mount Aggie has been moved before (it used to be across the street from Kyle Field, next to the parking garage), and it can be moved again. There is no current plan to rebuild Mount Aggie, but perhaps if administrators were made to see how much students appreciate the structure, a plan would be put on the table. A concert could even be students' way of helping to pay for some of the costs involved. (And by involving Town Hall and having a concert, students may never have a better time adopting a cause.)