

GUILTY PARTY IS CHARGED

Nolan County Library presses criminal theft charges for overdue library books

Imagine the surprise of being pulled over for a minor traffic violation and arrested — for having overdue library books. Strange as it sounds, this was the story for one Sweetwater man because of Nolan County Library's policy of filing criminal charges on people who do not return their library books.



KELLN ZIMMER

Today, James Fox has criminal theft charges on his permanent record and must explain his "theft of services" conviction to get a job.

This practice has been on the books for years in Nolan County. County Attorney Lisa Peterson said more than 20 people have been arrested in the last 10 years. The crime is a class B misdemeanor with a maximum penalty of six months in jail and a \$2,000 fine.

The library staff proposed a plan to get tough on borrowers when their 50,000 book inventory began to walk out the door and not come back. The policy has been under scrutiny because the news media has learned of the policies and practices of the library.

Although the library has come under fire for their policies, more than 80 percent of late materials are now returned, and the policy is viewed as an overall success by the library and county attorney. As for Fox, he pleaded guilty to the theft charges and was ordered to pay a \$300 fine, serve one year of probation and commit 100 hours of community service. All this for \$29 worth of late fees on four books. Nolan County should take a hard look at this policy to see if the punishment outweighs

the crime. As it stands, this is an unfair and absurd practice.

The library should take care of its customers and foster a relationship of respect for the books and other customers who wish to read them, rather than a fear of the law. Turning patrons over to a collection agency might be a more suitable punishment for those who do not return library books. Criminal theft charges should be reserved for people who have a malicious intent to take the property of others.

The library fine is designed as

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a tool to ensure the prompt return of library materials, protecting the library and the customer and allowing full range of circulation for a book.

The Sterling C. Evans Library at Texas A&M states that its overdue fines are used to further the library's resources: "monies collected as fines for overdue materials are used by the University libraries to purchase additional library books and other materials

in high demand."

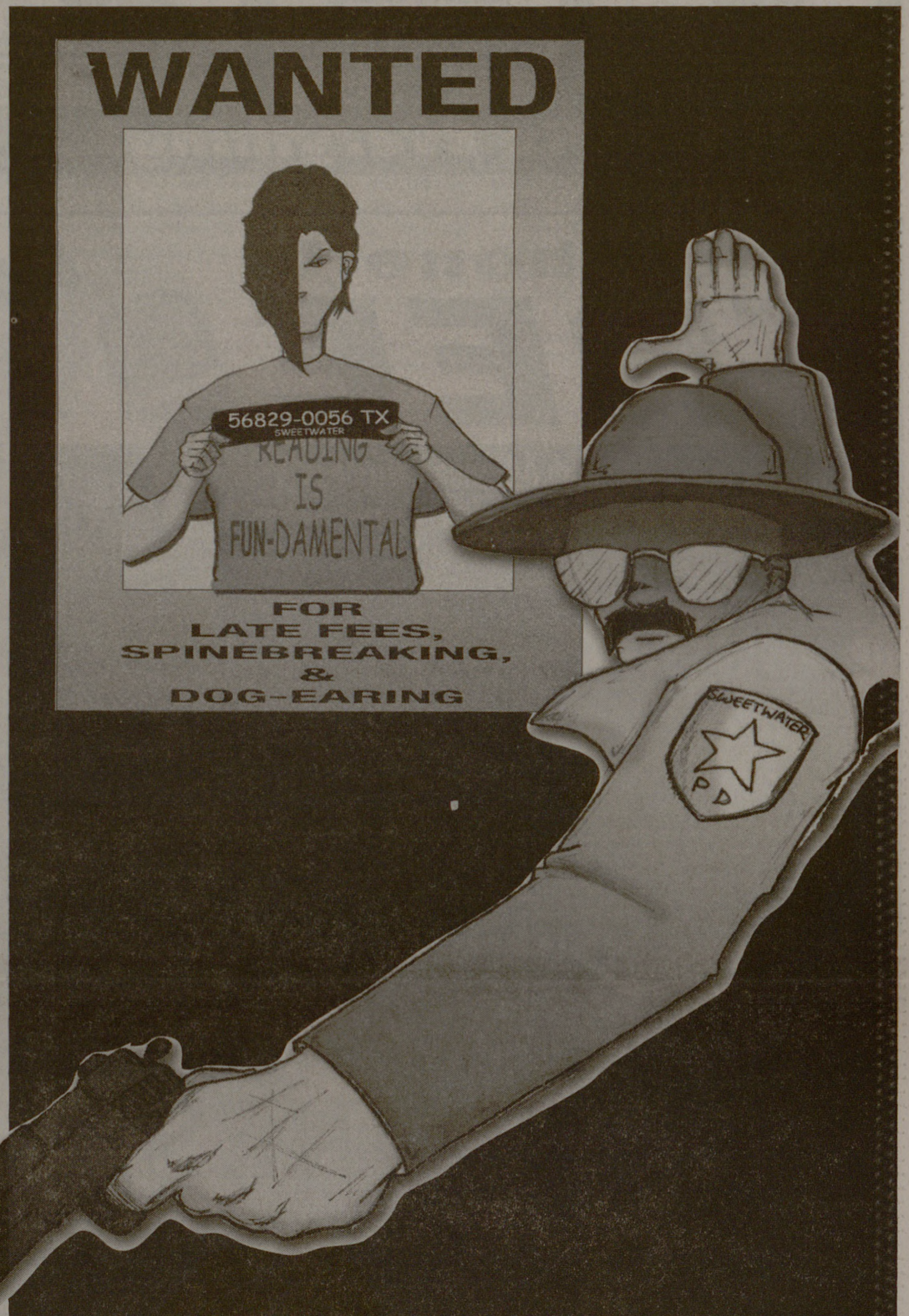
This is how a library should conduct itself. The fines are in place to protect the library and its users, and the proceeds from this will further the scope of the library. There will be no criminal repercussions for not returning a library book, you simply will be denied privileges essential to your education if you abuse the freedom the library has given you.

In the Nolan County Library's defense, they are offering a valuable, essential service to its city's residents and they have the right to protect themselves and their services. Patrons should take library policies seriously and on receiving up to four letters asking for the books to be returned, they should return what they borrow — the books belong to all citizens. This allows every patron to realize the full potential of a library's resources.

But the punishment should match the crime, and criminal theft charges are a high price to pay for keeping books after their due date.

The moral of the story is to heed library policies and due dates. If one fails to return a library book on campus, the harshest form of punishment will be a block from registration. Sweetwater authorities might just haul the offender to jail.

Kelln Zimmer is a junior English major.



JOE PEDEN • THE BATTALION

Unnecessary greed Novelist paid money for advertisement

The last refugee of the marketing industry has succumbed to the call of the mighty dollar. Novelist Fay Weldon was paid an undisclosed sum of money to prominently place the Italian-owned jewelry store, Bulgari, in her next book. The book is fittingly titled *The Bulgari Connection*, and its characters shop exclusively at the store. Literary integrity has been bought out by the advertising industry, and this is a shame.



BRIEANNE PORTER

While many people say being paid by a jewelry company is no different than by a publishing house, that idea could not be farther from the truth. The literary corner has always been seen as a place where an author's imagination is essential to the story. Yet, with this move into an advertising industry, an author's imagination is second to what company will pay for a place in the book.

In a New York Times article, President of the Authors Guild Letty Cottin Pogrebin said, "It is like billboard advertising of the novel. I feel as if it erodes reader confidence in the authenticity of the narrative." When people read books now, they will wonder if a company paid to have its name placed in the novel.

In the Boston Herald, an editorial said, "Now authors use brand names for good reasons — perhaps to show something about a character, perhaps to add believability to a story." But intentionally accepting money for product placement is something new to the industry. This new wave of advertising will destroy the credibility of books.

Many people see this merge of litera-

ture and marketing as the next move making everything able to be sold.

Sporting events and movies have long since succumbed to the marketing world. With everything from the James Bond car to Pepsi on the television show "Law and Order," the world appears to be turning into a giant commercial. It is logical to see the merger between writing and advertising, but what of the integrity of an author's creation? It does not seem possible that an author's work can still be seen as literature when a company pays for product placement.

In a Boston Globe article, BookHampton bookstore manager Chris Avena voiced the concerns of many others when he said, "I do not know how many of us here on staff would be able to get past the concept to find out whether it is a real book or a piece of advertising." Many others may stop reading because they fear that all they are reading is an advertisement for some company.

In a world that is plagued with commercials and gimmicks to attract customers, the marketing industry has found one of the few places that had yet to be tainted by the greed of money. The literary community and the world of avid book readers should shun this kind of commercialism.

The public cannot escape advertising that is in every facet of their lives. Now, the door into a marketing-hyped world has opened and advertising has entered into the last sanctuary. Literature, that last sanctuary, was the place where the public was able to hide from the commercialism that has consumed the world. Authors need to resist the urge to accept money for product placement and to protest this kind of greed in the literary world.

Brieanne Porter is a junior political science major.

The children's nightmare Recent tragedy calls for child comfort

In the wake of the recent terrorist attacks, people across the country are faced with the challenge of moving on. However, moving on should not be confused with forgetting children.

From the start of the disaster to where the country stands today, there has been one constant problem. Who should be talking about it and how long should these discussions continue?

There is not anyone who can provide a straight-forward answer for this problem, and each person must decide what is right for them. Still, it must be realized that while weeks have passed since the attacks, it is important that many people continue to take the time to talk about it. Parents and teachers have an obligation to talk to their children and students about the events and emotions involved in something that no one should ever forget.

No one can say exactly what is appropriate to tell a child, and parents are struggling for an answer. First and foremost, it is crucial that parents take the time to sit down and talk to their children. Parents need to be asking about their child's day everyday, but right now they also need to ask what their child is hearing in their classrooms or what their

friends are telling them at recess.

It is imperative to realize that children do not always understand what "terrorism" is and they need an explanation on a level that they can understand. They also need to explain that while bad things have happened, there is no reason for children to be afraid.

Some children may not realize the pictures they see are the same two buildings falling to the ground, instead of more buildings. If nothing else, turn the television off so that they are not continuously watching the attacks and have a discussion that is not

children should not be afraid of airplanes or foreign people.

These are things not being talked about in classrooms and if parents are not talking, there is no way their children are hearing them. Young children are not the only ones in need. Students from grade school through college are sitting in classrooms and they deserve to have an explanation.

Schools must come together and decide what is appropriate for each grade level. Everyone must be in agreement so that the students can be on the same level and parents can have a clear understanding of what information is being given to their child.

Not to talk about the events in New York and Washington, D.C., completely is neglecting the opportunity for students of any age to learn. Something historic has happened, and it is now a part of all American's lives. If no one is talking about it, there will not be an understanding of the history that these students have been a part of.

It has been nearly three weeks since the events, but explanations will be necessary for years to come.

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led by a journalist. The little things in this situation cannot be overlooked, or children will have no option but to be afraid.

The emotions involved are an issue of their own. Children may not be realizing why people are crying and for any child, the sight of seeing their mom or dad cry is very frightening.

Parents must explain that it is ok to feel sad and alright to cry because people dying (even strangers) is a very sad thing. They also should explain that



MELISSA BEDSOLE

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