

LETTER FROM PROFESSOR J. PERIAM DANTON
ON KOTEI'S ARTICLE IN ISSUE NO.11

To the editor:

I have read with much interest Mr. Kotei's perceptive 'review article - Comparative Librarianship' beginning on page 33 of issue number 11, in 1976.

Referring to my book, The Dimensions of Comparative Librarianship (not the Dimensions of International Comparative Librarianship, as cited in the article), Mr. Kotei suggests that I hold the view that comparative librarianship 'cannot concern itself with social and moral issues'. This is not at all my position and, what is more important, it is not, in my understanding, the position of comparativists in other fields, particularly education. The point, rather, is that the aims and objectives of comparative librarianship are not normative. The purposes of comparative study are not moral improvement and the determination of values; the 'discipline' does not prescribe what should be done, nor does it determine values, which is quite different from saying that it is not concerned with social and moral questions.

Later, on page 34, Mr. Kotei contends that I believe comparative librarianship 'cannot concern itself with social and moral improvement, because national variables are so vastly diverse that no two societies are comparative'. The latter part of this quotation is exactly opposite to the position I have taken and that of most comparatives today. On pages 128-133 of The Dimensions... I spoke to this question and pointed out, inter alia, that 'comparisons of the office of chief librarian of cities of over a million population in the world would be possible and meaningful'.

Sincerely yours,

J. Periam Danton
Professor Emeritus
School of Library and Information Services
University of California
Berkeley, California 94720

SCOLMA AREA SPECIALISATION SCHEME

The SCOLMA Committee is currently examining the present situation of the area specialisation scheme and a fuller report on the matter will appear in due course. Briefly, it looks as though most of the institutions which originally accepted a particular area are willing to continue with their commitments. There are, however, a few institutions which have expressed a desire to withdraw from the scheme. This poses a problem for SCOLMA, of course, and it will be necessary to find replacements for them. If any library is interested and willing to take over any of the areas/subjects mentioned in the list below could they please write in the first instance to the Secretary of SCOLMA (Mr. M. McKee, The Library, SOAS, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HP).

The areas in question, with current library, are:

1. French-speaking Equatorial Africa (Aberdeen University)
2. Portuguese-speaking Africa (King's College London)
3. Zaire, Rwanda, Burundi (Leeds University)
4. African trade unions (Nuffield College, Oxford)
5. African geology (Department of Earth Sciences, University of Leeds)