

## LETTERS

Dear Editor,

I was most interested to read the report (*ALJ* 16/2) on the questionnaire concerning the *ALJ*, and to read your Editorial commenting on it.

At an early ARLIS/U.K. Eire Conference (at Aberystwyth, I think) we were confidently told that an art librarian should have (I'm not quoting *verbatim*) "two European languages fluently, and two more in which he/she can get by". I'm glad to find myself (English, with only a modest grasp of French) in your good company! I guess that few language graduates end up as art librarians and "library school" doesn't, it seems, go into languages in depth. Yet I am very much at one with your feeling that horizons must be widened, even though I wouldn't express such reservations about the English language as you seem to do in your fifth paragraph. The humility you seek may perhaps be felt when we note that the Pidgin name for the main bank in Papua New Guinea is "numbawan munihaus". The tool has been transformed by its user.

Of course we English speakers "need to work on reading other languages" – but there's not so much spare time for doing so in today's understaffed working situations. And how do we share the non-English content of *ALJ* with our staff, who may well be English-only speakers? It seems to me that the way forward might be in full-length translations rather than abstracts or summaries. When you summarise, you have of necessity to select: no-one's perfect, and your summariser might just miss the point of the article. This would be less likely when a full translation is done: you quote requests for "fuller English summaries" on p.4.

I don't think it's an impossible aim; we have a fair sprinkling of bi-, tri- and even quadri-lingual books published in art subjects (in which the Swiss seem to have been leaders). The *ALJ* could perhaps widen its appeal to non-Anglophones by doing this and achieve that very internationalism which you seek.

But this may be expensive – or have you yet to explore the riches of talent that lie among *ALJ* readers? The next questionnaire should perhaps seek information on your readers' linguistic capacities and capabilities.

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Thank you for your suggestion. I would actually like to go further than you propose, by exploring the 'riches of talent' which readers could contribute to the *Art Libraries Journal* over and above mere linguistic capabilities. To this end, a form is enclosed with copies of this issue (and is also reprinted on the opposite page) inviting readers to involve themselves more actively with the *Journal* in a variety of ways.

Editor