



she could—from preparing the title sequences on her laptop to giving us some great speaking tips, and playing the part of “Professor Freeman.”

The play is a takeoff on *Our Town* by Thornton Wilder (but nobody dies). A disclaimer:

Any resemblance of any of the characters to any real person, living or dead, is purely coincidental. Except for any resemblance to me. I admit to having behaved just like every one of these characters at one time or another (a critical lapse in judgment and a personal failure on my part for which I am solely and completely responsible).

#### ACT ONE: Introduction

STAGE MANAGER: This play is called *Our Library*. It was written by Kelly Browne. In it you will see Brian Striman as the Catalog Librarian/Head of Technical Services; Maureen Shepard as the Acquisitions/Serials Librarian; John Pedini as the Micrographics & Audiovisual Librarian; Sharon Blackburn as the Gov Docs Librarian; Anne Burnett as the Foreign, Comparative, & International Law Librarian; Jessie Cranford as the Circulation Librarian; Angus Nesbit as the Reference Librarian; Karen Westwood as the Associate Director/Head of Public Services; Cathy Lemann as the Computer Services Librarian; and Kathryn Fitzhugh as the Director. Each change in speaker is identified by the position only (e.g., Catalog Librarian appears as “Catalog”).

*As the Stage Manager introduces them, each character takes a chair and places it in an “office.” The Catalog Librarian/Head of Technical Services, Acquisitions/Serials Librarian, and Micrographics & Audiovisual Librarian sit; the others leave the stage.*

STAGE MANAGER: The name of our library is the Grover S. Corners Law Library, just across the Arkansas line: longitude 36 degrees 3 minutes; latitude

94 degrees 6 minutes. The First Act shows part of a day in our library. The day is May 7, 1991. The time is just before dawn.

Well, I’d better show you how our library is laid out. Up here is the Director’s office. Very *plush*. And so *conveniently* located for access by the patrons. Way back there is Technical Services. Over there is the reference desk; across the hall’s the Circulation Desk. Reserve and the Reference Collection are over there. Gov. Docs is in the basement. Governor Clinton once made a speech from these steps here. Along here’s a row of WESTLAW and LEXIS terminals. Here’s the card catalog; there won’t be an OPAC for another five years.

*Stage Manager returns to podium.*

STAGE MANAGER: Nice library, y’know what I mean? Nobody very remarkable—like an AALL President—ever came out of it, as far as we know. Well, it’s about 8 a.m. now. Naturally, in Tech Services, the lights have been on for some time, what with cataloging and so on. But Public Services people have to work in the evenings while the patrons are here, so they sleep late.

So—another day’s begun. There’s the Catalog librarian coming out to get a second cup of coffee. With him’s the Acquisitions/Serials librarian and the Micrographics & Audiovisual librarian. God knows what they’re talking about. I don’t.

CATALOG: AACR squared . . .

ACQUISITIONS/SERIALS: Supplier IDs, International Standard Address numbers, selector codes, call tags, order slips, payment records . . .

MAV: But it’s not the heat or the humidity; it’s the residual thiosulfate that engenders the threat of oxidation to silver gelatin in polyester substrates!!!!

STAGE MANAGER: And here come the Gov Docs and Foreign, Comparative, & International Law librarians.

*The Gov Docs and Foreign, Comparative, & International Law librarians pantomime arriving at work. They stand a few feet away from the Tech Services librarians, who are still standing around talking gibberish among themselves.*

FOREIGN, COMPARATIVE, & INTERNATIONAL LAW: Morning, Sharon.

The following is an adaptation of a program presented at the 1998 Annual Meeting in Anaheim, “The Whole is Greater than the Sum of its Parts: Teambuilding in *Our Library*.” The “SIS Players,” a “theatrical” (in the loosest sense of the term) group, including members of all 13 AALL SISs, performed *Our Library*, subtitled “Bringing Up OPAC,” which used the OPAC to demonstrate how an interdepartmental law library team composed of individuals with diverse expertise and focus can result in higher-quality service to patrons.

*Our Library* is a joint effort of a “cyberteam” of all the SISs. I’d like to thank everyone involved for their contributions to the script, for giving up their Saturday night in Anaheim to rehearse, and, most of all, for being willing to wear silly costumes and risk making fools of themselves on the stage.

Susan Freeman, a consultant and trainer for 22 years, has specialized in teams and total quality management issues for the last nine. She works internationally, with Fortune 500 firms, universities, hospitals, government agencies, and has even been a training director for a law firm. She estimates that she’s trained over 30,000 people over the years. But the real reason I asked her to speak is because the *Our Library* proposal got accepted, and I figured I’d better learn a little about teambuilding. She was the speaker at a seminar on the subject. An entertaining speaker, she talks about teambuilding in the “real” world—what to do when it doesn’t work. And she practices what she preaches: She threw herself into the production of *Our Library*, doing whatever

GOV DOCS: Morning, Anne. Anything serious goin' on in the library today?

FOREIGN, COMPARATIVE, & INTERNATIONAL LAW: Yessir. I heard the Director's calling a meeting of all the professional librarians to discuss getting an OPAC.

STAGE MANAGER: And here come the Circulation and Reference librarians and the Associate Director/Head of Public Services. I told you Public Services librarians get to sleep late.

*The Circulation and Reference librarians and the Associate Director/Head of Public Services pantomime arriving at work. They are yawning.*

FOREIGN, COMPARATIVE, & INTERNATIONAL LAW: Morning, Jessie. Morning, Angus. Morning, Karen.

GOV DOCS: Did you hear the Director's called a meeting of all the professional librarians to discuss the possibility of getting an OPAC?

CIRCULATION: Why does she want to meet with all of us? She's never been interested in our opinions before!

REFERENCE: Probably wants to know if we'll give up part of our salary to fund the OPAC.

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR/HEAD OF PUBLIC SERVICES: Now, Angus. I happen to know that she just read an article on "teambuilding" in *Management Today* and is thinking of forming an OPAC "team."

CATALOG, ACQUISITIONS/SERIALS, and MAV (in unison): What in the heck is "teambuilding?"

STAGE MANAGER: That'll do. That'll do. Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen. That's the end of the First Act, friends.

*Lights out. Everyone takes a chair and arranges them to be like PCs, with the "OPAC" in the middle. Lights come back on.*

## **ACT TWO: Forming the Team**

STAGE MANAGER: Five years have gone by. Yes, the sun's come up almost two thousand times. Hired a Computer Services librarian in 1994. She has a JD, a library degree, and a BS in computer science. Drives a blue Volkswagen bus. Hates Chinese food. Plays the Accordion.

*Computer Services librarian pantomimes arriving and turning on*

*PCs where all the chairs are standing. She places a tablecloth over the OPAC after turning it on.*

STAGE MANAGER: In our library we like to know all the facts about everybody. So. It's five years later. July 7, 1996. The Director is about to unveil the OPAC.

*Everyone gathers around the center PC expectantly. The Director appears and everyone starts to clap.*

DIRECTOR: This is a momentous day. We've all worked so hard to make the OPAC a reality. The only thing that made it bearable is that we did it together. Yea Team!

*The Director pulls the tablecloth off the chair. Everyone but the Director chants in unison, "Teamwork! ... Teamwork! ... Teamwork!"*

STAGE MANAGER: Thank you. Thank you, everybody. But I have to interrupt again here. You see, we want to know how all this began—this teambuilding. I'm awfully interested in how things like this are accomplished.

*Director and Computer Services librarian disappear. Everyone else rearranges chairs in a straight line, sits down, and pantomimes looking bored, reading, knitting, etc.*

STAGE MANAGER: Let's go back in time. To the afternoon of May 7, 1991. Now everyone is waiting for the Director to show up for the first "OPAC team" meeting.

*Director arrives.*

DIRECTOR: Hello, everyone. I brought you together to work as a team to bring up an OPAC. Karen, as Associate Director, you're in charge. Have a preliminary report in six weeks. Well, I'm off to a budget meeting with the Dean.

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR/HEAD OF PUBLIC SERVICES: OK, I propose we meet from 10 to 12 every Friday in my office, starting tomorrow.

*Everyone gasps in horror, then freezes.*

STAGE MANAGER: Five weeks go by . . .

*Everyone is talking among themselves. No one is listening to the Associate Director.*

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR/HEAD OF PUBLIC SERVICES: OK, everybody, this is our fifth meeting, our deadline is fast approaching,

and we're not even close to having an RFP.

*The Associate Director steps to the front of the stage. Everyone else freezes and she speaks to the audience.*

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR/HEAD OF PUBLIC SERVICES: Being OPAC team leader is going to look great on my resume. But everything I try to do just meets resistance from some people. (*Points at the Catalog and the MAV librarians, who are sitting together, and gives them wilting stare.*) I spend most of the meetings just wishing I (or maybe all of them) were on an extended cruise to *anywhere*.

*The Associate Director steps back to join the group.*

CATALOG: Well, I've written the group several memos on how I think we should proceed, and you've yet to even address them. If you're not interested in what I have to say, maybe I just won't offer my opinions any more.

MAV: (sarcastically) Well, aren't we the "A" team—I pity the poor fool who stands in the way of your OPAC.

*The Catalog librarian steps to the front of the stage. Everyone else freezes and he speaks to the audience.*

CATALOG: I don't know why I wasn't named team leader—John and I are the only ones smart enough to understand how an OPAC works. And John is one of those geniuses with no people skills—no one—except for me, of course—can understand a word he says!

*The Catalog librarian steps back to join the group.*

CIRCULATION: I'm sorry guys, I've got an important meeting with the student workers now—gotta run!

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR/HEAD OF PUBLIC SERVICES: Jessie, you had an "important" meeting the same time last Friday. Why isn't this a priority for you?

*The Circulation librarian steps to the front of the stage. Everyone else freezes and she speaks to the audience.*

CIRCULATION: Well, frankly, John (*points*) has totally alienated me with his constant interruptions, sarcastic remarks, and putdowns. And Brian (*points*) alternates between trying to force his agenda on us and refusing to participate in discussion. Karen's leadership is only nominal. It was

*continued on page 12*

obvious by our third meeting that we were never going to get anywhere. I'd rather go work. Someone has to run the library!

*The Circulation librarian steps back to join the group.*

CIRCULATION: It is a priority for me, Karen, but this is the only time the students can meet. Bye!

*The Circulation librarian leaves.  
Everyone else freezes for a moment.*

STAGE MANAGER: Wow! What went wrong?

*Everyone left on stage leaves.*

STAGE MANAGER: To find out what went wrong, I've asked Professor Susan Freeman from the Marketing Department of our University to come down here and give us a kind of scientific account, you might say. May I introduce Professor Freeman of our University. A few brief notes, thank you, Professor—unfortunately, our time is limited.

PROFESSOR FREEMAN: Well, does *that* look familiar? I'm going to need some audience participation here. Ron, could you bring up the house lights? Carol Burnett used to say that, and I've always wanted to say it, too. But seriously, back to this team stuff. What did you see that looked familiar when you've tried to put teams together in your institutions? Anybody? Just shout it out.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: People refusing to participate?

PROFESSOR FREEMAN: Yes, and why not? Throughout history our success has always been measured by how well we did as individuals—that's what got us through school, through our careers up to now. But suddenly people are telling us they want us to be like the Rockettes—they don't care how high we can kick, but whether we can hit the same spot 850 times a performance. Teambuilding is not about stars, it's about consistently working together—that's what makes the Rockettes so cool. But it is a whole new set of skills.

You know what research has shown? Only 10% of people actually *like* change. And you know what that means, don't you? Yea, right, 90% of us don't feel that way. So right away, you've got a lot of people who just don't buy into it. It's up to the team leader to keep reminding everyone why they're a team. What is it, performance-based, that we can do better as a team than we can all do

independently? The team leader has to make it real to people.

OK, so what else looked familiar?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Egos and jealousy?

PROFESSOR FREEMAN: Yes, and that's really all about *trust*, isn't it? We have to see that there is a reason to trust the other team members with all the things we feel so important about: our ideas, our issues, our problems that need to be solved. But the message we've been getting most of our lives is that "Some people make decisions, and other people follow them." But now we're introducing teams into our libraries and saying, "We're all going to work together now—trust me!" Well, yea, right. In the past you've always had to look out for yourself or nothing will happen. It's the team leader's responsibility to ensure that, yes, things are going to be different this time.

What else did you see?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Different styles of communication?

PROFESSOR FREEMAN: Is that bad, though? No, it's not bad, just confusing. It's always been confusing, though, hasn't it? Before we had teams, if you didn't like someone's style or you didn't understand them very well, you just did your job. And if it became intolerable, you just went to your Director and said, "You've got to do something about him—he's driving me insane!" You'd expect someone else to take care of it. But with teams, we're all responsible for resolving the differences between us. And that's why the conflict resolution skills Our Librarians are going to learn in the next act are such important tools to have in your toolbox. You know, it's up to us; we're all adults, and we should learn all the conflict resolution tools we can.

What else?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: The Director was not leading the way she should?

PROFESSOR FREEMAN: No she wasn't, was she? I think one of the three most important things team leaders can do is to keep preaching mission, to keep reminding everyone, "This is why we're here—this is what we're doing." Pretty hard to do when you're not even there, when everything else seems to have a higher priority than the team? Nothing can take precedence over the mission of the team: no one's ego, no one's history, no "this is the way we've always done it"—nothing.

The second most important thing the team leader can do is to help the team resolve all the changes they're going through. In the old days people went to a supervisor with questions and got answers. A team leader needs to help people solve the questions themselves, to turn the questions back to them, to help them to help themselves.

The third most important thing the team leader can do is to manage the trust factor. We *all* find ourselves in patterns or habits that make it difficult for people to trust us. For example, has this ever happened to you? You go into someone's office to tell them something very important, and they say, "sit down, sit down. Don't mind me sorting through my mail—gee, it's busy today. But I can do two things at once—go ahead, I'm listening." All you see is the top of their head. When you walk out of the room, how do you feel? Not very important. There's a psychological term for it—you feel *invalidated*.

You say, "But I *can't* stop, I'm busy, I *have* to do two things at once. Well, you know what they say—if you don't do it right the first time, you'll have to do it over again. And where will you find the time to do it over again? If someone's innocuous, benign habits are causing a problem, it is up to the team leader to make sure the team members trust each other enough to draw attention to the problem so they can resolve it and go on. Giving people your attention helps build their trust in you, and each other. You need to spend time on building the team, not just on the issues the team is dealing with.

STAGE MANAGER: Thank you very much, Professor. We're all very much obliged to you, I'm sure.

PROFESSOR FREEMAN: Not at all, ma'am, not at all.

STAGE MANAGER: This way, Professor, and thank you again. That's all the Second Act, folks.

*Lights dim.*

### **ACT THREE: Resolving Group Conflict**

*Everyone except for the Director and the Computer Services librarian comes back on stage and sits in their chairs (still in a row).*

STAGE MANAGER: Now we're going to skip a few weeks in the life of Grover S. Corners Law Library. The Director has called a meeting to find out why she didn't get her preliminary report on time.

*The Director enters.*

DIRECTOR: Hello, OPAC team. I didn't get my preliminary report on time, and I've called this meeting to find out why.

*No one says anything. Everyone looks at each other, shrugs shoulders, shuffles feet, etc.*

ACQUISITIONS/SERIALS: Well, I might as well say it right out, Kathryn. I don't like the way you say we're a team and share responsibility, but don't give anyone else the authority to do anything. I'm sorry if that hurts your feelings, but I've just got to tell the truth and shame the devil.

DIRECTOR: I'm glad you said it, Maureen! If it's the truth then you ought to say it. A Director needs her librarians to tell her the truth. Well. It sounds like we really need to clear the air before we can make any progress. I tell you what—let's try a technique for resolving group conflict that I learned about at the Teambuilding seminar I went to last week. It's called "Clearing and Setting Aside." Everyone writes down what they think the group's barrier to progress is, then we'll go around the room and everyone will summarize what they've written. We've got to be open and honest for this to work. And we've got to have ground rules: no putdowns or personal attacks, and nothing said leaves this room. OK?

*Everyone looks at each other and nods.*

DIRECTOR: Great! Can I borrow your hat, Kelly?

*While the Director is walking to the edge of the stage to get the Stage Manager's hat and back, everyone else pantomimes writing on a piece of paper.*

DIRECTOR: OK, let's summarize what we've written. Who wants to go first?

FOREIGN, COMPARATIVE, & INTERNATIONAL LAW: I will.

DIRECTOR: OK, I want everyone to listen to Anne's thoughts and concerns as if you were hearing them for the first time. Anne?

FOREIGN, COMPARATIVE, & INTERNATIONAL LAW: No one likes creative ideas around here. Everything we do, we do because that's the way we've always done it and for no other reason.

DIRECTOR: Thank you, Anne. Now I want you to wad up that piece of paper and put it in this hat.

*The Foreign, Comparative, & International Law librarian does so.*

DIRECTOR: OK, who's next?

GOV DOCS: No one realizes how hard I work . . . my student assistants and I have so much to do . . . I take work home with me every night . . . I work on weekends . . .

DIRECTOR: Thank you. Could I have your piece of paper now, please?

*The Gov Docs librarian wads up the paper and puts it in the hat.*

DIRECTOR: Great! OK, next?



*The amazing Fiche Man! John Pedini (Social Law Library, Boston, Massachusetts) prepares for his role in Our Library as Micrographics & Audiovisual Librarian (what a stretch, huh?).*

REFERENCE: It seems like some of us are trying to come in under budget no matter what and don't care about functionality.

DIRECTOR: Thank you, Angus.

*The Reference librarian wads up his piece of paper and puts it in the hat. Then, one by one, so does everyone else. The Director then takes the hat and returns it to the Stage Manager. The Stage Manager empties the contents of the hat into a trash can, then puts the hat back on.*

DIRECTOR: There! Now that that's all behind us, let's start at the beginning. Have you written a team mission statement yet? Do you have any performance-based common goals? A list of steps you need to take to achieve those goals?

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR: Ummm . . . not exactly. It seems we have sort of a difference in opinion between Public Services and Technical Services.

DIRECTOR: I can see why we have a problem, then. OK, let's try another technique I learned at that Teambuilding seminar—you know, maybe the next time Professor Freeman gives a seminar we should all go. This technique is called "Building Common Ground." I'd like for the Technical Services librarians to stand over here, and the Public Services librarians over here.

*The Catalog, Acquisitions, and MAV librarians form the Technical Services group. The FC&I, Circulation, and Reference librarians and the Associate. Director form the Public Services Group. The Gov Docs librarian stands in the middle, obviously undecided.*

GOV DOCS: I never know which way to go.

DIRECTOR: This time, go with Tech Services. All right, I'd like for each person to write a clear statement of his or her group's position. Kelly, could you record the statements on a white board or flip chart for us?

STAGE MANAGER: Sure.

*Everyone pantomimes writing on a piece of paper.*

DIRECTOR: OK, who would like to go first from the Public Services Group? Angus?

REFERENCE: Well, we think the user interface is the most important thing. It would be so much easier to train the patrons if we had a windows-based interface; they're a lot more intuitive. And subject-searching by keyword is crucial.

FOREIGN, COMPARATIVE, & INTERNATIONAL LAW: I'd like to see a non-Roman alphabet display.

CIRCULATION: I'd like to see patron-initiated Interlibrary Loan.

*The Catalog librarian is hopping up and down like he can't stand it anymore and is about to burst.*

DIRECTOR: Brian?

CATALOG: Functionality is more important than how pretty it is! That's why Authority Control is key.

ACQUISITIONS/SERIALS: Not to mention Serials Check-In in a variety of formats. And I'd like to see electronic claiming and ordering in the Acquisitions Module.

*continued on page 29*

GOV DOCS: Serials check-in sure would make my job a lot easier. Yours, too, Angus—you're always trying to track down the latest issue of a journal. And I wouldn't mind being able to search by SuDoc number.

MICROGRAPHICS & AUDIOVISUAL: Management reports. I need management reports.

DIRECTOR: Now what do these two positions have in common?

ASSOC. DIRECTOR: Everything we want is to better serve the patrons?

DIRECTOR: That's it! You see, we're not so far apart after all! I think we can start writing our mission statement now!

*Lights dim, then come up. Everyone is standing in a row, holding hands and bowing.*

STAGE MANAGER: Thank you. Most everybody's left Grover S. Corners Law Library. There are a few lights on: the Gov Docs librarian is still filing the pamphlets the government sends out. Hmm . . . . 5:15 at Grover S. Corners Law Library. You go home and get a good rest, too. Good night.

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