

Library's Problems Discussed



by Phyllis Turim

"Budget cuts did hurt the York College Library," admits Professor Fred J. Harsaghy, York's chief Librarian, but he is hopeful that the City and State through the Board of Higher Education will provide additional funds to hire some new staff.

Prof. Harsaghy estimated that York's library budget dropped from close to \$400,000 last year to about \$250,000 currently, with funds for part-time professional, clerical and student help cut from \$130,000 to only \$30,000. Last year there were 25 part-timers work in the Library, but only 16 are left this year and these are working greatly reduced hours.

"There are no fewer full-time workers this year, but the Library was promised more full-timers who never materialized," Prof. Harsaghy said. "Recent York administration talks with city fiscal officers and Chancellor Robert J. Kibbee," he said, "make me feel hopeful that some funds for additional library workers will come through shortly."

One result of not having enough help for the Library is that approximately 30,000 books have not been fully catalogued, he said, even though all but about 5,000 of them have been organized by subject areas and are available to faculty and

students.

"Many books will be outdated by the time they reach the shelves," Prof. Harsaghy said. "The lack of staff slows down very drastically the processing of library materials."

Prof. Harsaghy pointed out that it does not always make good sense to catalogue books in the order they arrive or just because the library has them. About 12,000 of the 30,000 uncatalogued books are from the Appel Collections that York purchased at a very low cost per volume. Some of these volumes are quite old and have limited value, he said.

"It may even be advisable not to catalogue the out-of-date books for the time being unless some special academic requirement arises," Prof. Harsaghy said. "We try to make decisions like this on the basis of the academic needs of faculty and students."

York has lost perhaps as much as five to 10 per cent of its books through theft over the past four or five years, Prof. Harsaghy said.

"Many books are stolen from the Library," he said. "Hopefully, when we're able to install a book detection system this will come to an end. According to our very tentative preliminary statistics the theft rate here is not as bad as at some of the other City University campuses where it is rumored that the

theft rate in certain special subject areas is as high as 18 per cent."

York's Library is trying to get the 3-M Company's "Tattle-Tale" Book Detection System to curb thefts. Under this system, every book would have a sensitized marker which would set off an alarm when carried through a turnstile unless the book had been checked out properly.

The York Library includes about 110,000 books, 18,000 microfilm reels of periodicals and serials, and 19,000 volumes on microfiche, which are three inch by five inch strips of film, each covering an entire book or article.

"Realistically, on a long-range basis especially, it is better to invest in microforms because they are less space-consuming than books," said York's Chief Librarian. However, he said there are no plans to put large numbers of books currently needed on film, but instead to film journals and research material not frequently used.

"Under the guidance of faculty advisers, portable readers for the microforms could be used overnight and on weekends as well as in the library," Prof. Harsaghy said. "The eyes of the students using these readers will not be hurt in any way because they give excellent reproduction of the microforms."

Prof. Harsaghy, who holds two masters degrees plus a Ph.D. from New York University, started his career in 1930 as a junior page in the New York Public Library. He worked for Newsweek and for the Office of War Information in World War II. He directed library programs in Japan, Saudi Arabia and Puerto Rico. Prof. Harsaghy said he came to York in July, 1972, because "I was enchanted by the York College dream."

Despite current budget problems, Prof. Harsaghy remains very optimistic about the future development of York College's Library. "I am very hopeful that we will overcome all the fiscal problems and that the Library will be a part of York College, that everyone will be proud of," he said.