My status report following our latest series of meetings, site visits, etc., will cover several topics: public relations, field coordination, signage, and life in general.

On the subject of public relations and its effect on a library system and its community, an object lesson greeted us on arrival in Lake Charles this time. The local newspaper had published a series of three articles dealing with some "controversial" aspects of the Calcasieu Parish library projects. The general tenor of the articles was negative, which often tends to be the approach of the news media. The fees and hourly rates were listed for the offices of Lee Brawner (library planner and consultant), Bill Hidell (architect), and us (designers) under the always suspicious category of "out-of-town consultants." Also trumpeted were some of the upholstery fabric selections and prices. Why is it that no one ever dwells on the costs of door closers, heat pumps, or a particular exterior building material?

Having worked on over a hundred libraries throughout the country, we encounter such press on occasion and take it in stride. Still, fielding such questions was stressful and time-consuming for Library Director Lynda Lee and her staff. Their responses were thoughtful, accurate, supportive, evenhanded, and reassuring—the approach that would be my advice to all readers who might be confronted with a similar situation. A thoughtful local designer wrote a supportive letter to the editor in which our qualifications were cited and fabric costs were put into professional perspective. This gesture was greatly appreciated.

I was glad, in general, that the library projects continued to receive press coverage, even if on the "juicy" side. There can rarely be too much publicity in terms of the public's awareness of libraries.

We visited most of the thirteen building sites, which is always exciting and instructive. To see the physical manifestation of all those meetings, drawings, and specifications is a thrill I would wish to all. The feel of the spaces, their forms, and scale always holds some surprises. Despite a few obvious glitches and miscues (one project with a half-vault roof form had had its beams originally installed backwards), we were very encouraged about the eventual product. On Sunday morning, Clerk-of-Works Dick Hyatt gave generously of...
his free time to accompany Andrea and me as we drove the "circuit." I'm still worried about the precision of floor outlet locations as they relate to various technologies and furniture placement. I have since alerted the project architects to do a thorough field check on all such conditions.

Seeing the prototypes of the custom items was also heartening. With a few minor refinements the final products should give the library system decades of serviceable, distinctive furnishings.

We checked a few wood samples on the site and did some figuring on alternative proposals for carpeting on one of the projects.

One morning was devoted to the delivery and discussion of our thirty-page signage documents to Wes Guidry. As I mentioned in an earlier issue, he is in charge of signs for all Calcasieu Parish public buildings. Again, his creativity, savvy, and can-do attitude make us optimistic that he will be able to implement the initial signs and banners and to supplement them later as needed. Regardless of the amount of thought and care given to a signage and graphics system there will always be additional items needed after the shakedown period.

As you can see from the photographs of the projects, most are nearing completion. These next several months will be very busy and exhausting for furnishings Clerk-of-Works Butch Roberts as he coordinates the furniture installations and moves. Still, few events are more exciting. Soon I will be able to share illustrations of some of the completed projects.

Finally, a paragraph on life in general. Last Saturday night we attended Lynda's wedding and reception. As with most of our clients, we've become very good friends, but being fortunate enough to be among the celebrants that night was truly special. A large percentage of the two hundred people there were staff, consultants, architects, and board members. Lynda has not just made this project a joyful reality, she has also made its contributors feel like a family, her family. We all enjoyed seeing each other, eating Cajun food, trying to learn the "Achy Breaky," and wishing Lynda and Thor a very happy life. By the way, Lynda will herein be known as Lynda Lee Carlberg.

I'll talk to you next time about the final stages of the projects.