3. Clarence Leuba refers: "To most of my colleagues in psychology, for instance, a librarian would seem unqualified to guide a student seeking to orient himself in a specific aspect of psychology, such as motivation, or even in a general way in psychology as a whole."

**Comments: Thein Swe**

Having been asked to comment on some of the problems and nuances surrounding employment opportunities for American trained librarians from foreign countries, I feel that I must first begin by posing the question as to what type of library employment is being sought at. Surely, the inherent pre-conditions for first qualifying for consideration for employment differ drastically between the types of libraries themselves. For example, Federal libraries would normally require citizenship as would some State and some public libraries, although of course there are exceptions. The exceptions seem to be built around language expertise, or around certain areas of expertise which an American citizen would

---

* Mr. Swe is Social Sciences Librarian, Northwestern University, Evanston Illinois.
not normally bring to the job. Therefore, it seems that unless there is a unique talent usually built upon some foreign element of the librarian from abroad, the chances of securing a library position which, by and large, does not require special expertise may be very minimal at best, and, at worst, may not exist altogether. This leads us, it seems, to the fundamental issue of our own career aspirations as well as to the degree to which we conceive of the importance of our potential contribution to the library in which we wish to work.

More often than not, American trained librarians from foreign countries face a fair amount of what I will term ‘categorization’ in that our country, culture, and language of origin is usually the starting point for many libraries in assessing our potential contribution to their needs. If, therefore, we wish to be engaged in library duties requiring no more particular expertise or background than what library schools in this country prepare their students for, we often face the prospect of being ‘Asianized’ or, at least, being pigeon-holed in some fashion. When faced with this sort of situation we must, I feel, be extremely articulate in presenting our assets and potential outside the context of our ethnic experiences and background. For some of us who have had library experience, but for whom the very *raison d'être* of such an experience has been our ‘Asian’ attributes, particularly in the area of language and culture, we must, of necessity, draw as many parallels as we can between the ‘Asianized’ job and the more ‘general’ one we happen to be seeking. Specifically, I personally do not see why a cataloger who has hitherto been cataloging books for an Asian collection (albeit those materials in the vernacular) cannot possess the necessary and fundamental knowledge to transfer ability and tsak to the more ‘general’ area of cataloging Western language materials.

In concluding these very brief remarks, I wish to re-emphasis then that it is usually a question of our visa status and of the ‘special attributes’ which prospective employers over-concentrate upon in their evaluation and which in many cases handicap the achievement of our goals and aspirations. Needless to say, we must make certain that our qualifications,
whether they be in the area of English language expertise or in general areas of librarianship, stand the test of comparison and competition. In this regard, I urge that we be librarians first and, Asian librarians second, without, of course, attributing any particular order of importance to those two conditions which, to me are more one and the same than different. Thank you.