

# the reactor

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The Central Intelligence Agency is the arm of government which gathers information from all over the world, brings it together, analyzes it, files it to be retrieved easily, and doles it out to those who can prove that they are trustworthy and also need to know.

No matter how high your clearance, if you don't need to know, you're not supposed to learn. The budget of the CIA is top secret. It is buried in the budgets of other agencies, which effectively hides the true budget of all agencies involved from the checks and balances of public scrutiny.

SAN MATEO county has its own Central Intelligence Agency. Its budget is well-known, (about 2 percent of the county budget, a real bargain) and instead of some bureaucrat deciding who "needs to know," the user himself decides what he needs, or wants, to know.

I refer to that pillar of free service and voluntary decisions which increase the user's fund of culture, knowledge and pleasure.

The Public Library is my own favorite Central Intelligence Agency.

I'VE NEVER made any secret of my pleasure that the San Mateo County library system exists, and especially that Pacifica is blessed with two branches. It would be hard to improve on the personnel. It's comforting to know that a government employee need not be a time-serving bureaucrat. These librarians are not.

The community library idea is one of the happiest inspirations of our American democracy.

Why Andrew Carnegie decided to donate a portion of his steel-based fortune to hundreds of local libraries I have no idea. I know that in several towns I lived in during my childhood I was grateful for his seedmoney.

AS A TEENAGER, I was disappointed to comprehend that at the rate of one book a day, it would take me a thousand years to read through the San Francisco public library. I have since recovered, but because I could not read everything, I realized that I must pick and choose, specialize, not try and read all there is about every thing. Selectivity and judgment, making personal decisions. That's what using a library is all about. If you haven't done it lately, try it.

It's fun to pick a subject, or an idea, look it up in the index, follow it up. If you're lucky, you may even be able to put certain facts together in a new way, discovering ideas not previously known. Libraries are storehouses of facts waiting to be juxtaposed. Why not do some juxtaposing this week?