

# Not Just a Librarian

by Anne Grosso

Can one person be a librarian, a counselor, a playwright and a research scientist? Smith Garrett Robinson, the head and only librarian at the Health Science Institute is all these. He takes a personal interest in the students at the Institute and tries to help them an every way he can.

"The young people here at Hunter are creative and know what's going on," says Mr. Robinson. He explained that he asks students at the Institute how they feel about the library and tries to encourage them to come in and use it as much as possible.

Mr. Robinson's goal is to help the students "achieve independence", in their ability to use the research material available to them. He feels that independence is what education is all about.

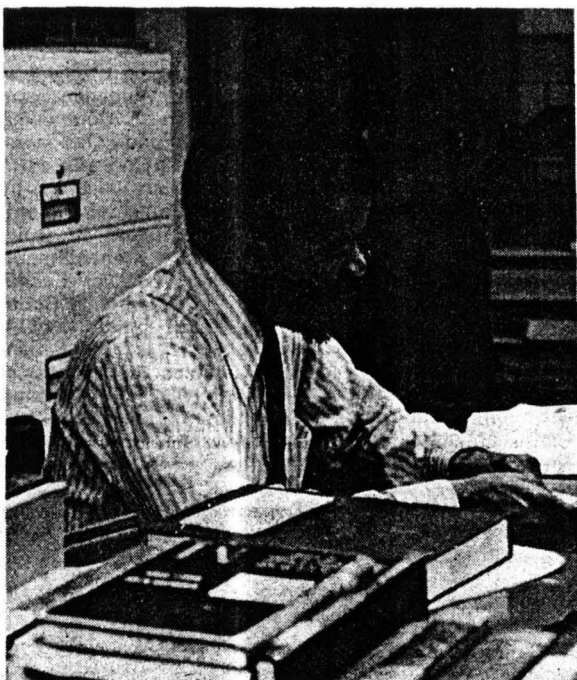
When Mr. Robinson first came to Hunter in 1972, the Institute did not have a library, only a reading center. Since then, room 229 of the Institute has been developed into an excellent library for material in all of the health sciences because of the efforts of Mr. Robinson.

He recalls that on his first day of work the library was flooded and the books were in cartons on the floor. Now the library is an attractive place with a rug on the floor and books on the shelves.

Mr. Robinson's philosophy is that a librarian should go out of his way to help a student. "If anything is published anywhere in the world," he states, "a good librarian can get it."

After graduating from Ohio State College where he majored in micro-biology and physiological chemistry, Mr. Robinson worked in cancer research. However, he soon tires of working in a laboratory because, "I felt isolated," he said, "I wanted to work with people because I enjoy people."

He then took a position in Jersey City State College teaching Black Studies, specifically creative writing and black theater. While doing community organizing, (encouraging people to exercise their voting rights, etc.), Mr. Robinson met a librarian who convinced him to go to Rutgers for his masters in library science. At present he is working on his second masters in



*Librarian Robinson*

envoy photo/Doris Stepanian

Environmental Health Science.

Prior to working at Hunter, Mr. Robinson worked at Douglas College, which was all female. "It was a good experience for me in that it forced me to re-examine male values," he said. Mr. Robinson is now on the general faculty advisory committee for the Women Studies Program here at Hunter.

The budget cuts have also affected the library at the Institute. According to Mr. Robinson, the budget for the library has been "reduced to almost nothing." Therefore, Mr. Robinson has written to companies for donations and has obtained books for the library from some of them along with book donations from alumni and professors. Also, Mr. Robinson gathers material from magazines, on his own time, which he keeps in file for students' use.

The budget cuts have also cost Mr. Robinson all of his student aides. He now only has one assistant, Helen Gentile, to help him run the library.

Mr. Robinson is active in numerous organizations including the Environmental Health Association of Hunter College through which he moderated the debate on the super sonic transport, recently held at Roosevelt House.

He is listed in Eugene O'Neill's Theater Foundation directory of playwrights for 1977 and has done theater workshops for prisoners.

He is also a member of The Dramatists Guild, The American Library Association, LaCUNY Library Association and Concerned Citizens of East Harlem.

Mr. Robinson lives on the Lower East Side with his wife and two children, ages nine and eleven.

Some of the students at the Health Institute had a few positive things to say about Mr. Robinson. "I find Mr. Robinson a librarian, gentleman and a very helpful hand," said Lawrence Carter, student and Provost of the Community Health Education Department. "He has helped me remove the anxiety I have had about libraries. Since I've been here (two years) the library has become my favorite place to visit and I attribute this to the nature of the library and the personnel it holds."

Christine Garrettson said, "He is very concerned with the students and goes out of his way to find research materials."

"He is the most amiable librarian I ever met," added Pevril Benjamin. "He knows his library and is a beautiful person."