

Gorman / continued

because "the title more appropriately fits the position."

"I was very pleased to be given the title of dean," Gorman adds. "My role is creating a library which has the collections and services that make it an important and meaningful part of people's education. The library is not someplace where the students just go because they have to write papers. The library is as important as the classroom; it's where the students get a good part of their education. There is learning to be gained here."

Leaning forward, Gorman continues, "When people say, 'I hardly ever used the library when I was in college,' I wonder how much their degrees are worth. [Thomas] Jefferson once said that an educated populace is essential to the survival of freedom. I really believe that."

Gorman's love of libraries — actually being among the materials — is evident. He readily admits that he always wanted to be a librarian and consequently has spent his entire life — from his childhood in England to his professional career in the United States — in libraries.

And, in spite of a 17-page curriculum vitae, Gorman redefines the meaning of humility when he says, "I have a reasonable amount of library experience."

"Reasonable experience" is 10 years with the third largest academic library in the United States, a library career in Great Britain that earned him the elected title of Fellow of the British Library Association, and employment in public, corporate and national libraries.

Ironically, the attraction to CSUF was that the mega library at the University of Illinois couldn't offer Gorman what he wanted most — to be a librarian. As acting university librarian, his administrative duties prevented him from getting involved in and staying in touch with the library's day-to-day activities.

"The head of that library is nothing more, or less, than a bureaucrat," he explains. "I wasn't a librarian; I wasn't doing anything connected with libraries, so I decided to look for a smaller library in a respectable institution."

"I'm a great believer in keeping in touch with the clientele. That's one thing at Illinois I couldn't do. It is so huge — 35,000 students, 35 departmental libraries and 7 million volumes. So we're talking about quite a library — that's eight times larger than this one."

Gorman also likes the fact that the Madden Library is not fully automated. He is committed to turning this "astoundingly good" library into a more progressive, outward-looking library by offering programs and services to increase its use, not only by students and faculty, but by the community as well.

"You can build up the best collection of books in the world, like the British Museum Library," Gorman explains. "It has this huge collection of books, but it is so difficult to use that library that I doubt one-fifth of its potential is ever realized."

"Libraries live and die by their services. Every book in a library has a potential user and every user coming into a library has a need for some book. Our job is to make as many connections between the user and these resources as possible. If we do that — make those connections — and if they're fruitful, easy and productive, then we're succeeding."

Discovery...

Almost a dozen years ago, when Michael Gorman had first arrived in America, one of his students was "a very nice man" from Fresno.

"All I knew about him, apart from his being in my class, was that he was in the Coast Guard," Gorman says. "So, to be perfectly honest, until I applied for this job, I thought Fresno was on the Coast. Obviously my geographic knowledge of the San Joaquin Valley was not great, but I was very favorably impressed by the city when I came here."