JO AN S. SEGAL
Executive Director
Bibliographical Center for Research

Competencies for Library Networking and Cooperation

Since Sunday evening we have enjoyed outstanding papers on the competencies required for the use of the new information technologies in librarianship. We have looked at the needs for using technology, the kinds of competencies needed in different types of libraries, and training and education needed for developing these competencies. The final section of the program has included Julie Virgo's paper on the association role in developing professional competence. I would like to present an argument which I hope will both offer some new material and provide a framework for summarizing many of the ideas presented during the course of the clinic. I will discuss competencies needed by librarians from the point of view of the cooperative library agency. I see two major needs.

The first is for a body of professionals to work in such agencies and the second is for an enlightened clientele of librarians who are familiar with the role of those agencies and able to take the greatest advantage of what they can offer. I believe that the secret of these competencies lie less in knowing how to perform certain tasks than in a values clarification process which identifies values such as cooperation, humanism and ethical behavior as foremost among the characteristics needed by librarians in cooperating for the use of library technology.

COMPETENCIES FOR LIBRARIANS WORKING IN NETWORKS, CONSORTIA, OR SYSTEMS

The major areas of competency which I believe are necessary for librarians who wish to work in cooperative agencies of one kind or another

fall in seven categories. The first is communication theory and practice; the second, teaching and training competencies; the third, mastery of the field of librarianship; the fourth, knowledge of specific systems which form the basis for the service of the agency; fifth, business administration; sixth, planning ability and skills. The seventh "competency" is not really a competency at all but a clarification of values.

Communication Theory and Practice

The librarian wishing to work in a networking situation must have some understanding of communication theory and practice. Topics which should be familiar to such librarians include a knowledge of group dynamics and how a group functions and what the relationships are between people and how they can best be recognized and used to facilitate the work of the group.

A second skill is in the area of interpersonal relations. It is important that network librarians understand the dynamics of interpersonal relationships in their work with each other and with the staffs of the libraries whom they are serving.

A third skill is that of organizational communication; the ability to assist member libraries in evaluating the communication which goes on in the library and in facilitating the work flow is extremely important. This knowledge needs to be practiced within the network as well.

A fourth extremely important ability of network librarians is that they must possess good listening skills. We think that we are good listeners but in fact we are usually politely, or less politely, awaiting our turn in a conversation. The ability to hear what other people are saying and what feelings are imbedded in what they are saying is extremely important.

The next communication skill is one usually included in job descriptions—that of writing and editing. The network librarian is expected to be able to express him- or herself competently in writing. This is an extremely important skill, particularly as we are required to provide documentation for systems which are not always easy to use and for which inadequate documentation is often provided by the system designers. Editing of our own and one another's work is also part of this activity.

Finally, we must be able to express ourselves orally. Network librarians are constantly being called upon to make public comments. Whether we are speaking extemporaneously before a meeting where we happen to be the only one who has any information about a certain topic, or whether we have been asked to provide a formal paper at a meeting such as this conference, public speaking is a skill which network librarians will be called upon to practice.

Teaching and Training

Since continuing education activities are a large part of the work of networks, consortia, etc., the capacity to teach or train is an extremely important skill needed by network librarians. In order to decide what kinds of training to offer, networks must evaluate the need. Needs assessment activities are highly important and skill in this area can be acquired.

Second, the network librarian needs to be able to prepare and carry out workshops and training sessions. Skills needed for this activity are administrative, teaching and documentation skills. All of these are extremely important and none can be slighted. It may be that different combinations of staff are needed to carry out all the functions, but the more versatile the individual librarians are, the better will be the quality of the workshops or training offered by the network.

Next, the network librarian must be able to design the instruction itself. This requires a broad knowledge of the field of librarianship plus a knowledge of the specific area for training and teaching, and finally an understanding of instructional methodology for teaching adults. Adult education techniques differ from pedagogical techniques and include more enlightened use of audiovisual materials, group participation methods, a constant gauging of reactions, and fast on-the-feet thinking about potential new directions the training must take.

Finally, in order to provide a well-rounded teaching and training program, the network must select personnel from inside the staff and from external sources. Knowing what one's shortcomings are is an important part of this effort. The careful selection of an outside consultant may enhance the network's ability to serve its libraries far beyond the short-term economics of providing training with in-house staff.

Mastery of the Field of Librarianship

Network librarians must have a broad mastery of the field of librarianship. It is unwise to choose for network staff the person who has limited experience. The most valuable network staff will include individuals who have served in different types of libraries, in both technical and public services, and in both practical and academic aspects of librarianship. This mix of staff will lead to credibility of the staff in the eyes of librarians in specific types and sizes of libraries, and in both public and technical services, and will thereby increase the network's effectiveness in dealing with its publics.

In order to keep abreast of what is occurring, networks must encourage and support their staff in their attendance at conferences and membership in professional associations and must provide a decent professional

collection for their regular use. No network librarian can afford not to meet regularly with his or her colleagues, or not to keep in touch with the journals which carry information about library cooperation and technology, and the major conferences on library cooperation and technology that go on.

Knowledge of Specific Systems

Next comes a competency which probably is the first one that would jump to many individuals' minds in thinking of what a person would need in order to be a competent network librarian—namely, knowledge of the specific systems which form the basis for the service the agency provides.

Cooperative agencies include those which offer interlibrary loan services, those which provide technical processing for groups of libraries, those which provide online database searching, those which offer cooperative purchasing, those which exist for the purpose of collection development, and those which provide OCLC or other bibliographic utilities as their main product and service. Many networks provide combinations of these products and services. While individual staff members in networks may specialize in one or another of these systems, it is advisable that everyone on the staff have some knowledge of all the systems. This is important whether you are representing the network at a State Library Conference, making a speech, attending a professional meeting, or answering the telephone when the person in charge of that department happens to be out of town. This knowledge of systems can only be kept up through constant use of the systems.

While several suggestions for this kind of competency maintenance have been made, few networks have adequately solved the problem of providing opportunities for use of systems by their staff. Some ideas for improving this situation include: exchanges of staff between libraries and networks, undertaking of specific projects for libraries so that staff librarians will have the opportunity to practice systems operation, and repeated attendance at advanced training workshops especially designed for network staffs.

Business Administration

Networks are not libraries. Some of them are governmentally supported but many more than half of the twenty-two OCLC networks are not-for-profit corporations which operate very much like small businesses. As the BCR Board likes to point out, we are a not-for-profit corporation but we are also not-for-loss. Four areas which need to be attended to in the

area of business administration are: financial literacy, personnel management, library management, and the care and nurturing of governance boards.

Network librarians often arrive on the scene with very little knowledge of finance. Simply being able to read a balance sheet and understand what it says is extremely important. This knowledge must be within the competencies of the network administrators, but the more knowledge there is among the staff of the agency as to the detailed financial affairs of the agency, the better run it will be. This is important because staff members must understand what the network's financial position is, why prices are set the way they are, and what leeway a network has in charging or not charging for its services in order to deal with libraries. In the area of personnel management, the usual skills for hiring and firing and for maintaining a motivated and satisfied staff are complicated by the fact that the agency is constantly represented outside its walls by its employees. Any dissatisfaction felt by those employees will be communicated to those with whom they come in contact regularly. The importance of keeping one's house in order, therefore, extends outside the walls of the institution.

Another sensitive matter is that network staffs are required to travel a great deal. This causes a kind of stress on the staff and on the relationships among staff members in an agency, which only those who have worked in settings where there is a great deal of staff travel can understand. Staff members return from trips with their briefcases loaded with tasks they have promised to perform for the librarians they have just left. When they arrive in the office they find their desks piled high with work which did not cease to come in just because they were on the road. Besides that, everyone seems to need to see them that day as soon as possible, and telephone calls are lined up waiting for them to answer. This causes enough stress in and of itself, but it also happens at a moment when they have been unable to speak to other staff members and they may feel that they have lost touch with what has been going on in the office during their absence. The management of personnel in this environment is at best difficult; a great deal of skill must be exercised in order to prevent serious burn-out and other personnel problems.

In the area of library management, network staff are frequently called upon to make recommendations regarding work flow. They are expected to know several different kinds of systems and to be able to make comparisons between them and to keep a somewhat objective point of view regarding this, whether or not they represent one major system. They may be called upon to make suggestions regarding the planning of space. All of these activities require that they acquire these competencies and share them with one another.

Finally, all networks have some kind of governing board. In most instances, this board is elected in whole or in part directly by the membership, and serves as the ultimate authority over the executive director and the staff of the agency. Working with a governance board is a challenge and a skill which can be developed. Few courses in this aspect of management are offered. A thorough understanding of the difference between governance and management needs to be instilled in a governance board; however, the limits to management's authority need to be taken into account by every chief executive officer.

Planning Ability and Skills

It would be impossible to say too much about the need for planning in the running of a library networking agency. Both short-term tactical planning and long-range strategic planning must be carried out by the network staff. In this regard, it should be pointed out that governance bodies play an extremely important role, although they must have competent advice from the network staff. This advice will only be valuable if it is based on a thorough grounding in economic, political and library technology trends, coupled with a thorough understanding of the organization's role and mission and the specific needs and desires of the libraries involved in the organization.

Values Clarification

Finally, a "competency" which is not a competency involves the clarification of a set of values for library network agency staff which must override all other considerations. The values of cooperation, of ethical behavior, and of human versus machine superiority must be examined and espoused by network staff if their efforts are to be seen as valid and credible. Espousing the cause of library cooperation while acting in an extremely competitive fashion with other networks or consortia, for example, is intrinsically contradictory and may reduce the credibility of an agency. Behaving ethically requires attention to both professional and business dealings between network librarians and library users.

Finally, in a profession which has long emphasized humanistic values, a network stands in danger of being seen as espousing technology at the expense of humans. Clarifying where one's values are is very important in order to maintain the credibility necessary to work in the world of librarians.

COMPETENCIES FOR LIBRARIANS IN GENERAL

In addition to competencies needed by librarians who wish to work in networks, I see a whole set of competencies necessary for librarians in order to make them effective users of networks and of library technology, particularly in the aspects of library technology which are cooperative in nature. In this area I see six major competencies which I would like to address. They are a broad view of librarianship, acceptance of responsibility for the profession as a whole, a cooperative attitude, openness to new modes of interaction, values clarification, and a knowledge of technology.

Broad View of Librarianship

This is less a competency than an attitude. It includes a willingness to continue learning through courses, workshops, training sessions, keeping up with the literature, and belonging to professional associations. It supposes an interest in librarianship which extends outside one's own library and outside one's own specialty.

Acceptance of Responsibility for the Profession as a Whole

This includes working with other librarians toward mutual goals. It means being active in professional associations and in the community as a spokesperson for librarianship and information science. Finally, it means being willing to seek cooperative solutions to common problems.

Cooperative Attitude

This attitude will be expressed in a willingness to seek solutions outside the usual framework of the zero-sum game. This means looking for a way to solve problems where all parties can come out ahead: no mean task. It also underlies a kind of generosity which urges a librarian to give his/her own time or to allow subordinates to use work time for cooperative projects.

Openness to New Modes of Interacting

This, again, is an attitude. It involves being open to treating vendors as something other than "the enemy," and recognizing that other types of libraries are neither "snooty" nor "inferior," but that all libraries have their own special needs while sharing certain commonalities. It means regarding networks and other cooperative agencies as friends wanting to help libraries; courting publishers and allowing them to court you—and

accepting their concerns about copyright. Finally, it means learning to overcome natural fears about technology by learning to use it for our own purposes.

Values Clarification

The same principles mentioned as desirable for network librarians apply here, too. Librarians need to clarify their attitudes about cooperation and autonomy. They need to be aware of the ethical problems associated with the automation of information, and they need to apply the principles of the ALA Code of Ethics to the unfamiliar areas of computers and databases. They must also consider the role of the new technology in their familiar library world. Where do computers fit in? How should they be harnessed to serve the cause of libraries and library users?

Knowledge of Technology

Lastly, the librarian needs to become competent in technology. Only in this way can its advantages be used to increase library effectiveness and efficiency.

SUMMARY

From the networking point of view, we need professionals to work in networks, and librarians to work with them. The advent of widespread library automation fosters a need to clarify the values of professional librarianship. In relation to "networking," I believe in the values of cooperation, humanism, and ethical behavior. These are less competencies than attitudes, but they can be learned and I believe library educators, library administrators, and other influential librarians can and should espouse these values as exemplary.

CONTRIBUTORS

LINDA BASKIN is Computer Coordinator for the Illinois Cooperative Extension Service and is responsible for development of a statewide network of microcomputers. In addition to general computer awareness, she has introduced staff to word processing, database systems, software development, and other microcomputer applications. Ms. Baskin has also been involved in developing software for the IBM personal computer, Apple and PLATO.

EVELYN H. DANIEL is Dean and Professor, School of Information Studies, Syracuse University. She holds a Ph.D. in Library and Information Science from the University of Maryland and has taught at the University of Kentucky and the University of Rhode Island prior to joining the faculty at Syracuse in 1976. She served as Coordinator of the Consortium for Developing Competency-Based Education Program for Media Specialists and her publications include her report *A Process for Developing a Competency-Based Educational Program for Media Professionals.*

CAROLYN M. GRAY is Assistant Director for Technical Services and Automation at Brandeis University Library in Waltham, Massachusetts. She holds an M.L.S. from the University of Oklahoma and her previous positions include Head of Cataloging and Coordinator of Automation at Western Illinois University and Assistant to the Director of the AMIGOS Bibliographic Council where she did training for several online systems. She has served as President of the Library & Information Technology Association, a division of the American Library Association.

HILLIS L. GRIFFIN is Director of the Technical Information Services Department at Argonne National Laboratory in Illinois. He holds an M.L.S. from the University of Washington and has been at Argonne since 1962 when he was appointed to be information systems librarian. His responsibilities at Argonne have included the development and implementation of automated systems in support of library operations, including the specification and selection of appropriate equipment. He has taught courses on library automation for the University of Illinois, the University of Wisconsin, and Rosary College.

JOSÉ-MARIE GRIFFITHS is Vice President of King Research, Inc. She has a Ph.D. in Information Science from University College London and has recently completed studies concerning the incorporation of new technology into library and information system operations for the U.S.

Geological Survey, State of North Carolina, Department of Energy, and U.S. Army. She is the author of a text entitled *Application of Minicomputers and Microcomputers to Information Handling* recently published by Unesco and has presented several seminars and courses dealing with new technology in both the United States and the United Kingdom.

KATHRYN LUTHER HENDERSON is Associate Professor in the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where she teaches courses related to cataloging and classification, bibliographic organization and control, and technical services. Prior to her present position she served as a cataloger in theological seminary and university libraries. Her major publication and research efforts are related to the history of descriptive cataloging. She has edited volumes related to *Trends in American Publishing*, *MARC Uses and Users*, and *Major Classification Systems: the Dewey Centennial* and served as the coeditor of *Conserving and Preserving Library Materials*. She was one of the first persons to have developed computer-assisted instruction for library science students.

DANUTA A. NITECKI is Associate Director for Public Services, University of Maryland Libraries. She has an M.S. in Library Science from Drexel University and an M.S. in Communications from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Her previous positions include coordinator, Illinois Research & Reference Activities in the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Library and head, Interlibrary Services Department and Coordinator of Automated Information Retrieval Services in the University of Tennessee Library. She has served as president of the Reference & Adult Services Division (RASD) of the American Library Association and has contributed to *RQ* both as the editor of the column "Online Services" and as database reviews editor.

JO AN S. SEGAL is Executive Director of the Bibliographical Center for Research (BCR) in Denver, Colorado. She holds a Ph.D. in communication from the University of Colorado and an M.S. in Library Science from Columbia University. Prior to joining BCR in 1978, she served for six years as librarian for the Western Interstate Commision for Higher Education. She served as chairman of the Special Libraries Association's Education Division in 1981-82 and is the author of papers on adult and lifelong learning.

LINDA C. SMITH is Associate Professor in the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-

Champaign. She received a Ph.D. from the School of Information Studies at Syracuse University. Her fields of interest include information retrieval, library automation and science reference service.

MIMA SPENCER is Associate Director of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. In recent years, she has presented workshops on computer literacy to educators and information specialists and has been involved in software design, staff training for file building and word processing, computer conferencing, and bibliographic searching.

RICHARD T. SWEENEY is Executive Director of the Public Library of Columbus & Franklin County in Columbus, Ohio. He holds an M.L.S. in Library and Information Science from Drexel University and served as Director of both the Genesee County (Michigan) Public Library and of the Atlantic City Free Public Library prior to coming to Columbus in 1979. He currently serves as President of Columbus Community Cable Access, Inc. and has authored articles on remote electronic delivery of information through libraries.

JULIE CARROLL VIRGO is Executive Director of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), American Library Association. She holds a Ph.D. in Librarianship from the University of Chicago and served as Director of Education for the Medical Library Association for a five year period before taking her present position in 1977. She is an active member of several professional associations and is the author of papers on various aspects of library education and professional continuing education.